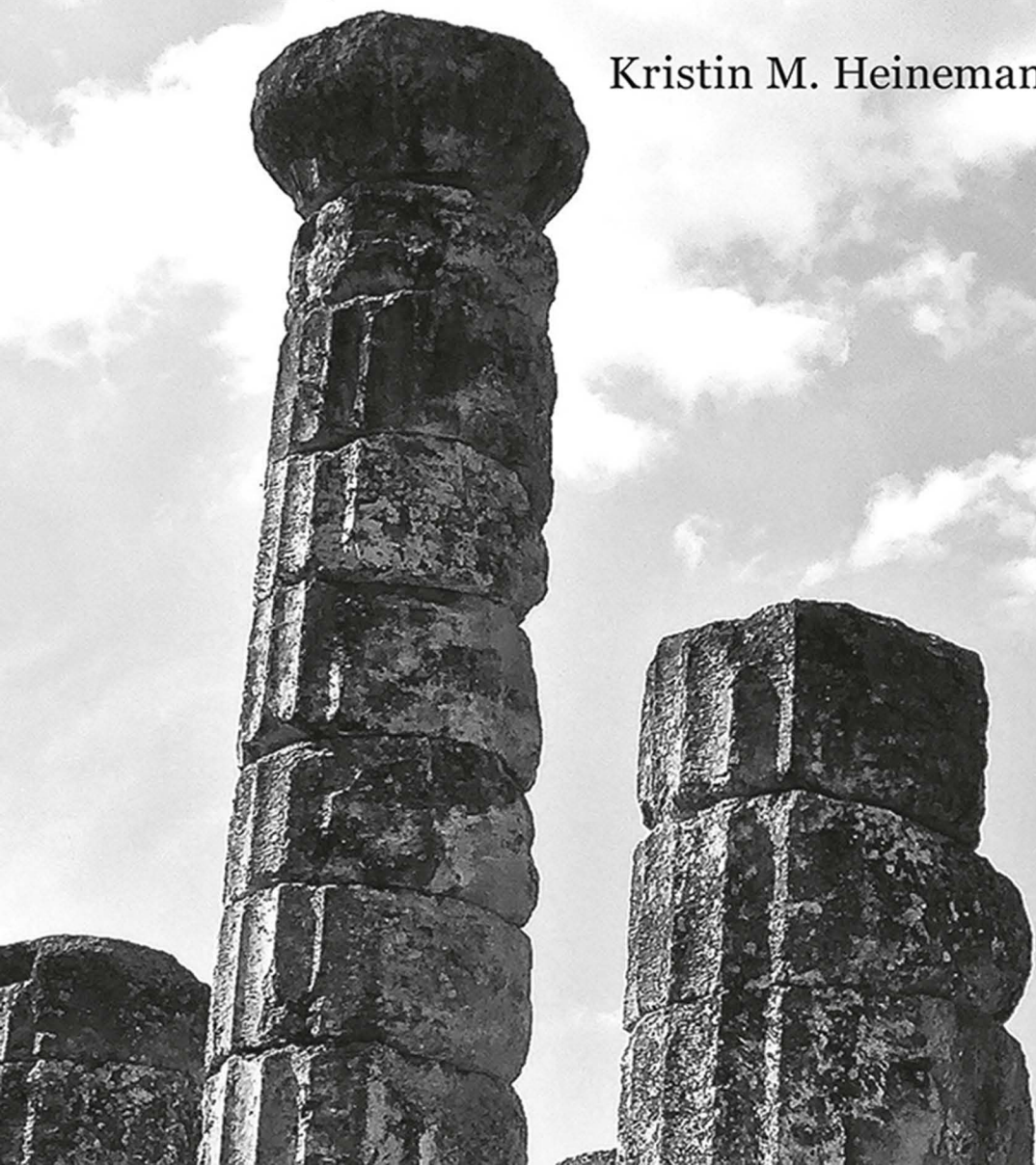


The
Decadence
of Delphi

The Oracle in the Second Century
AD and Beyond

Kristin M. Heineman



The Decadence of Delphi

Examining the final years of Delphic consultation, this monograph argues that the sanctuary operated on two connected, yet distinct levels: the oracle, which was in decline, and the remaining religious, political, and social elements at the site which continued to thrive. In contrast to Delphi, other oracular counterparts in Asia Minor, such as Claros and Didyma, rose in prestige as they engaged with new “theological” issues. Issues such as these were not presented to Apollo at Delphi and this lack of expertise could help to explain why Delphi began to decline in importance. The second and third centuries AD witnessed the development of new ways of access to divine wisdom. Particularly widespread were the practices of astrology and the Neoplatonic divinatory system, theurgy. This monograph examines the correlation between the rise of such practices and the decline of oracular consultation at Delphi, analyzing several examples from the Chaldean Oracles to demonstrate the new interest in a personal, soteriological religion. These cases reveal the transfer of Delphi’s sacred space, which further impacted the status of the oracle. Delphi’s interaction with Christianity in the final years of oracular operation is also discussed. Oracular utterances with Christian overtones are examined along with archaeological remains which demonstrate a shift in the use of space at Delphi from a “pagan” Panhellenic center to one in which Christianity is accepted and promoted.

Kristin M. Heineman completed her PhD at the University of Newcastle, Australia in 2012. Her research interests include the history of religion, women in the ancient world, and the intersection between Christianity and paganism. She is currently an adjunct at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, USA, and teaches widely in Greek and Roman history.

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Abbreviations

All citations of ancient text refer to editions in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (for Greek authors) and *The Packard Humanities Institute* (for Latin authors). The abbreviations of ancient sources cited follow those of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* for both Greek and Latin authors. English translations are given first, followed by the ancient text.

The oracular responses from Delphi correspond to the numbers of the 2004 edition of P&W (for example P&W R233 without page citation to distinguish from a non-oracular reference). Where necessary, Fontenrose's classification system will be used (for example H13).

Journal and Book Series Abbreviations

AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
AJPh	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
AncW	<i>Ancient World</i>
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
BAR	<i>British Archaeological Review</i>
BCH	<i>Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique</i>
BICS	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies, London</i>
CCAG	<i>Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum</i>
CIG	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Graecorum</i>
CIL	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
CJ	<i>Classical Journal</i>
ClAnt	<i>Classical Antiquity</i>
CPh	<i>Classical Philology</i>
CQ	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
CRAI	<i>Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres</i>
FD	<i>Fouilles de Delphes</i>
FGrH	<i>Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i>
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i>
IDidyma	<i>Die Inschriften. Milet 3</i>
IGRom	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes</i>

IJCT	<i>International Journal of the Classical Tradition</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
JÖAI	<i>Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Institutes in Wien</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
MHR	<i>Mediterranean Historical Review</i>
P&W	Parke, H.W. and Wormell, D.E.W. (2004) <i>The Delphic Oracle</i> , 2 Vols. Chicago University Press, Chicago, (reprint of the Oxford 1956 ed.).
PGM	<i>Papyri Graecae Magicae</i>
REA	<i>Revue des études anciennes</i>
REG	<i>Revue des études grecques</i>
RHR	<i>Revue de l'histoire des religions</i>
SEG	<i>Supplementum epigraphicum Graecum</i>
SIG	<i>Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum</i>
TAPhA	<i>Transactions of the American Philological Association</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

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Introduction

As Rome wasn't built in a day so the oracle at Delphi did not cease to operate overnight. Rather, the eventual silencing of the most famous oracle in ancient Greece witnessed a gradual and complicated evanescence. One of the old tropes used to describe the life cycle of empires and institutions is deeply engrained in historical thought – a civilization begins by hard work, determination, and unification. The dawn of new societies or institutions often is imagined as tough; from there, the civilization reaches its zenith, the heyday of culture, success, and development. Finally, often due to a lack of hard work and the softening of the population through greed or luxury, the society begins its steady descent into obscurity. This notion, like many tropes, is too black and white to truly capture the nuance of historical development. However, the reign of the oracle of Delphi has often been viewed in this light – the slow and crucial development in the Archaic period, its dominance as a political arbiter in the Classical age, and its decline into myth and superstition by the Hellenistic and Roman ages. Due to this idea of ascent, reign, and decline, much of the modern scholarship has focused on the first two periods of Delphic history, and not nearly enough attention has been paid to the later eras of oracular operations at Delphi. Although there is a kernel of truth to this model, the history and outline of Delphi's decline is far more complicated. This book aims to shed further light on a more neglected period in Delphic history, from the second century AD down to the final centuries of the oracle's operation at the end of the fourth century. In addition to establishing the status of the oracle and the sanctuary in the second century and beyond, this book examines the correlation between the decline of oracular consultation and the rise of a variety of arcane practices. As Delphi declined in frequency of consultation and in the political significance of issues presented, other, new forms of divination were increasingly sought. Astrology and theurgy offered a new dimension of divinatory access that better suited the needs of individuals in the second, third, and fourth centuries AD, while Delphi was in its final days of operation.

Before we begin, a few definitions must be understood, including what is meant by the “decline” of Delphi. By the second century AD and beyond, fewer oracular consultations from Delphi appear in our record, whether literary or epigraphical. Out of the 600-odd extant responses catalogued by Parke and

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Wormell (P&W), about 350 (58%) can be dated with some accuracy; the other 250 are of uncertain date. Of the datable 350, only 74 (21%) of those come from Alexander's death onwards and the majority, 278 (78%), are of an earlier date. To demonstrate further, of the 74 issued after 323 BC, only about 24 (32%) post-date the birth of Christ which, of the 350 datable responses, amounts to a mere 7%. It is clear that the oracular function of Delphi declined in the number of extant responses from the Roman period.¹ This trend is also reflected in the extant literary sources and has led many modern scholars to note the decline of Delphi after the Hellenistic age, with a brief revival in the second century, followed by a steep and irreversible decline during the Severan age.²

The decline of Delphi has also been characterized by the decrease in political oracles after the Persian Wars, and Parker notes that "even enquiries about cultic reform by whole states seem to become rarer after 300."³ The decline in oracles generally, and political oracles specifically, indicates a lessening of Delphi's influence on the Greek *polis*. The decline of "political" oracles from Delphi has been of considerable interest to scholars since the days of Plutarch in the second century AD. He observed that Delphi was consulted far less than previous centuries on political issues, and was now sought for simply personal matters.⁴ However, by contrasting the literary sources, which feature many fantastical oracles of extreme political importance, with the picture gained from inscriptional evidence a more practical and pragmatic character of Delphic divination is revealed.⁵

Likewise, Bonnechere warned of the skewed perception of Delphi's political importance, as seen from the literary sources, and notes that the epigraphical evidence from Delphi does not support a strong political tradition at the sanctuary.⁶ Indeed, the 52 total epigraphical responses from Delphi, out of the 517 responses compiled by Fontenrose, amount to only 10% of the corpus. Of those 52, only six concern political matters, 10 concern personal issues and 18 are religious in nature. This gives the impression those political matters were not the most significant concern at Delphi, at least as far as inscriptional evidence is concerned. Additionally, most of these inscriptions are not found at Delphi itself, but rather in the home towns of the consultants; this led Busine to observe that "apparently, the procedure of consultation did not involve the recording of the responses on a hard imperishable material, like the lead tablets found at Dodona or the stone inscriptions, like in Didyma."⁷

What then of the famous oracles of the "Wooden Wall" and Croesus defeating empires? Kindt has provided an excellent method of approaching the literary oracles and states that they "need to be understood not as accounts of actual responses but as aspects of a cultural discourse concerning the possibilities and limits of the divine-human communication institutionalized in premier oracles" and goes on to say "this also applies to many of the famous 'political oracles,' which should be interpreted first in the ideological and historiographic context in which they feature before general statements about the role of oracles in Greek politics can be made."⁸ Still, the decrease in political importance of oracular responses is important, and so I will define "political" oracles as those

that affect the entire community or *polis*, which could include religious concerns or famine, as opposed to those strictly concerning matters of the state in a legislative or governmental sense.

Many modern scholars have investigated the historicity of oracular responses from Delphi. Once P&W catalogued all the extant responses, the foundation of Delphic scholarship had begun. They categorized each response chronologically and examined the history of the oracle through the lens of the responses. Fontenrose built upon the work of P&W and restricted the parameters of oracular authenticity by dismissing several responses as not historically genuine. He arranged the oracles by category, not by chronology, dividing the responses into four groups: Historical, Quasi-historical, Legendary and Fictional.⁹ His criteria for objective classification are not always clear. He attempted to determine the veracity of the oracles in order to gain a perspective of what was actually said by the Pythia for a “more objective division of the responses.”¹⁰ This framework for dealing with the responses attempts to discredit several extant oracles and many of the traditional beliefs about Delphi. Fontenrose rejects almost all of the responses said to have been spoken in the first three centuries of the oracle’s history, 750–450 BC.

The system developed by Fontenrose does not allow for complete assessment of the evidence. If one were to disregard a response’s historical importance simply because, for example, it was recorded by an author of a late date, evidence that is crucial for the understanding of Delphi’s decline would also be disregarded: an author of a later date does not imply inaccuracy. By adhering to such a strict form of classification, the responses fail to be understood in terms of Greek history, thought, religion, and poetics. Oracular responses may or may not have been actually produced by a Pythian priestess, but they still represent what the Greeks *thought was acceptable* to attribute to the oracular function of Apollo, which is just as important as an actual utterance.

The examination of individual oracles is beyond the scope of our investigation. Rather, for our purposes, the “decline” of Delphi will be examined through the fact that fewer oracular consultations of *all sorts* are issued from the sanctuary from the second century AD and afterwards. Even oracles stemming from fiction, as Iles Johnston notes, give “no reason to assume that fiction presented a significantly different picture of what sorts of things Delphi was concerned with than did reality.”¹¹ Even if it cannot be proven whether an oracular response was given in the manner recorded, we can still learn a great deal from suspicious or fictitious oracles. In this sense, the *authenticity* is not questioned, but rather the context in which the oracles are placed within the larger circumstance of Delphi’s history. Many oracles that would otherwise be excluded from examination, under the rubric of Fontenrose, constitute valuable evidence. Rather than examining the merit of each political oracle to determine whether they were indeed prevalent at Delphi, we can examine the status of the oracle in the first centuries of our era through the lack of recorded responses.

The decreasing number of oracular utterances, however, should not be taken uncritically. Simply because there are fewer recorded oracles from Delphi does

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not necessarily mean that fewer consultations were taking place. However, in the absence of additional evidence, and the presence of the obvious fact that Delphi did cease to be consulted it can be cautiously assumed that the falling number of recorded oracles reflects some reality. Perhaps, though, the oracles in the latter centuries of operation were of a personal nature and so were not recorded. This alone is evidence that Delphi no longer held a position of authority. No longer was Delphi *thought* to play a substantial role and so even fantastic fictional stories of political involvement disappear from the record. The focus of our inquiry will be *why* Delphi was called upon less frequently for important political matters as well as general inquiries throughout the second and third centuries AD and what the status of the sanctuary was during this time.

The analysis of these issues begins during the Archaic and Classical periods, the era of Delphi's greatest prestige and impact. Chapter 1 examines the history of the Delphic oracle through important political oracles to demonstrate the extent to which Delphi was involved in Greek *poleis*. This will establish the peak of Delphic prominence so that the decline of the oracle, when it arises, can better be understood. A brief examination of the method of oracular divination will also be included. Delphi's history will be traced through the Archaic period, the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars, the Hellenistic period, and finally, Roman conquest of Greece. By the second century AD, our examination will become more focused on the literary evidence provided by Plutarch.

Plutarch is our best source for the decline of Delphi, particularly in the second century AD. He wrote three essays directly concerning Delphi, one of which specifically addresses the decline. These will be analyzed systematically in Chapter 2 to uncover the state of Delphi at this time as perceived by an insider through the proxy of contemporary visitors. First, Plutarch's *De Defectu Oraculorum* is examined to demonstrate the ancients' opinion of the reason for the decline of Delphi, including geological factors, population variance, and divine intervention. Second, evidence for the decline of Delphi from the essay *De Pythiae Oraculis* is addressed. The analysis of this second essay reveals the contradictory state of the sanctuary at the time when Plutarch was intimately involved with it: on the one hand, Plutarch writes extensively on the decline of the oracle, and on the other, hints at a thriving sanctuary and a revival in the form of new and restored buildings. This creates something of a conundrum. How can Plutarch be contemporaneous with both a decline and a revival at Delphi? This book offers a new approach to the decline of Delphi – the oracle was sought less frequently, but the sanctuary itself could still operate and thrive as a religious and cultural center. Delphi functioned on a variety of social, political, and religious levels; the oracle was an essential aspect of the religious activity of the sanctuary, but was not the sole attraction.

As such, Chapter 3 will examine the distinction between the oracle and other religious, political, and social procedures existing at the sanctuary during the second and third centuries AD. Through the investigation of the use of space at Delphi, both sacred and profane, a clearer picture of the status of

Delphi can be revealed. The sanctuary was able to thrive through the various religious festivals, the Pythian Games, the unique administration of the site, and dedications to Apollo. The chapter will end with an examination of the Christianization of the sanctuary during the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries AD. The way sacred space was shared and repurposed is crucial to understanding the decline of the oracle.

As the examination of Plutarch's essays shows, many of the oracular centers throughout the Mediterranean were declining by the second century AD. However, as Delphi's significance as an oracle was dwindling, Claros and Didyma in Asia Minor were experiencing a revival, not only in terms of the sanctuaries themselves (as at Delphi) but in the frequency and types of questions presented to Apollo. Political and state concerns were addressed to the god on the eastern side of the Aegean, as well as questions concerning magic, the nature of god, and theurgic concerns of the soul.¹² Nock has described these latter oracular responses as "theological" and I shall employ this term as well. I define the term as those questions presented to an oracular site which fall outside the established oracle-seeking queries, particularly focused on religious sentiments, which are not common to traditional Greco-Roman religion. Chapter 4 will examine the status of Didyma in the second and third centuries AD to contrast the oracular success in Asia Minor as compared to the extant oracular record at Delphi. Chapter 5 will do the same thing, but with Claros as the focus. Both chapters will investigate the nature of the questions presented at Didyma and Claros which, I suggest, contributed to their success. The lack of this expertise at Delphi helps to explain why the oracle there slipped further into silence as the oracles of Asia Minor continued to thrive.

By analyzing the different practices at the various sanctuaries, these oracles provide a broader perspective as to why there was not a universal, uniform decline of traditional oracles. The extant responses from Claros and Didyma demonstrate the capacity for these oracles to exercise unprecedented oracular authority in occult matters. This trend of consultation concerning issues such as theurgy, magic, and the nature of god – which were gaining more popularity within a civic context – is not seen at Delphi. It is therefore not only the movement from political to individual concerns which illustrates the decline, but also issues of new, esoteric practices about which we find little evidence from Delphi.

The final two chapters of this book examine the impact which the rise of new divinatory practices – astrology, Neoplatonism, and theurgy – had on the decline of Delphi.¹³ First, the words of Dodds must be remembered before entering into this area of research:

A new belief-pattern very seldom effaces completely the pattern that was there before: either the old lives on as an element in the new – sometimes an unconfessed and half-unconscious element – or else the two persist side by side, logically incompatible, but contemporaneously accepted by different individuals or even by the same individual.¹⁴

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Indeed, astrology, Neoplatonic beliefs, and theurgy operated alongside Delphi for several centuries and, in a certain sense, adapted aspects of each other to fit into a certain method or way of thinking. People increasingly sought rational and scientific answers to questions previously left to the gods. Astrology was seen as highly effective since the correlations with planetary movements and earthly phenomena could be seen by all; the predictions of celestial movement showcased the prophetic and scientific nature of the craft. In the case of religion, there was a growing preference for a personal relationship with the divine in the second and third centuries AD. Neoplatonism and theurgy provided access to this relationship. These chapters do not argue that these developments in astrology and theurgy instantly replaced oracular consultation; rather, these occult practices should be viewed as, in the nomenclature of Thomas Kuhn, paradigms.¹⁵

Kuhn's monumental work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, describes how new ways of thought come to dominate old methods of thinking. His theory concerns scientific thought, method, and theory. However, with due caution, this theory can be applied to a broader range of human thinking and even belief. First, he describes "Normal Science" namely "research firmly based upon one or more past scientific achievements."¹⁶ For Chapters 6 and 7, the term "traditional religion" or "Greco-Roman cult" describes the religious practices of the Mediterranean which are based on centuries of convention. Traditional Greek religion, including the practice of oracular consultation is a "religion," firmly based on tradition, ancient beliefs, rituals, and practices. These were the foundation of acceptable beliefs and actions. Greek religion operated for centuries in a "Normal" way, adhering to age-old observances.

"Paradigm" is a key term in relation to "Normal Science" and for Kuhn this means, "some accepted examples of actual scientific practice – examples which include law, theory, application, and instrumentation together – that provide models from which spring particular coherent traditions for scientific research."¹⁷ He cites the rubrics of "Ptolemaic or Copernican astronomy" and "Newtonian physics" as examples. For our purposes, there are two sets of paradigms, the first being oracular consultation situated within traditional Greek religion, and secondly, the grouping together of the esoteric practices of astrology, Neoplatonism, and theurgy into another paradigm. These paradigms exist side by side, for a time, but eventually one paradigm gains status "because," as Kuhn explains, "they are more successful than their competitors in solving a few problems that the group of practitioners has come to recognize as acute."¹⁸ This book aims to evaluate the degree to which astrology, Neoplatonism, and theurgy offered new ways to solve the problem of access to divine knowledge, thereby creating competition for Delphic consultation, ultimately contributing to the decline of the oracle.

One paradigm eventually succeeds over another because it can better deal with, answer, explain, and assimilate various "anomalies." According to Kuhn, "anomalies" can be considered "new and unsuspected phenomena" and are the catalyst for change in practice and theory.¹⁹ In the case of oracles, certain

“anomalies” also built up within traditional religion which challenged the foundation of cult. Such anomalies include the scientific forms of prediction seen from astrological observations, the increasing concern for the role of Fate in the lives of men, the ways in which theurgy could influence, change, and manipulate Fate, new philosophies such as Neoplatonism which postulated ideas of a personal connection with the divine, and the Chaldean Oracles that facilitated this connection. These new paradigms created anomalies through the services they offered, which were better adapted than Delphi to respond to the divinatory needs of the day. As society was infiltrated with new ideas, the oracles found it increasingly difficult to accommodate these new concerns. Delphi operated within traditional religion and to a significant degree helped, over the centuries, to establish what that entailed, and so breaking from that tradition was not only unfavorable, but, to a certain extent, impossible.²⁰ Eventually, a sufficient amount of anomalies built up and Delphi, as an oracle, ceased to be viable in a society which had turned toward rational explanations and scientific understanding on the one hand, and a personal religion and salvation of the soul on the other. I shall examine the possibility that these occult practices assisted in the decline of Delphi.

Thus, Chapter 6 examines the impact which astrology had on the Delphic Oracle in the first, second, and third centuries AD, with Kuhn’s theory utilized as a mental rubric. The scientific basis of astrology contributed to its popularity, drawing an ever-more rational crowd to its process and method to gain divine access: it had appeal for a learned audience. This chapter compares the various reasons for astrological consultations with those of Delphic consultation to demonstrate how the two forms of divination offered a similar function, thereby increasing the competition between the two; they became alternative means to the same ends. Furthermore, Chapter 6 demonstrates the familiarity of astrological notions for the Greeks, which created an easier transition into this particular form of access to divine knowledge. I examine the ability of astrology to provide a function similar to Delphi’s and how, once it had gained sufficient authority, it contributed to the decline of the oracle.

Chapter 7 focuses on occult issues, particularly the ways in which Neoplatonism and theurgy offered a new dimension of divinatory practice. First, the associations between theurgy, Neoplatonism and the written revelation of the Chaldean Oracles are analyzed to demonstrate a new conception of divine interaction with humanity. The divine formation, proposed by the Neoplatonists and utilized by the theurgists, is not entirely novel and so a brief outline of the philosophical background better situates the concepts within their historical and philosophical contexts. Chapter 7 analyzes the various beliefs of the Neoplatonists – focusing specifically on Porphyry and Iamblichus – and the effect these notions had on society. With the spread of ideas such as salvation of the soul and personal unification with the ultimate divinity, Delphi was declining in relevance. The increase in soteriological concerns throughout the Mediterranean is also demonstrated through a brief examination of Christianity, and particularly some Gnostic ideas. This chapter argues that the decline was

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assisted by the fact that the oracle did not specialize in these new religious features of society.

These new, esoteric practices represent the need for different levels of society to gain access to the divine. Although it is difficult to correlate such a relationship, based on the extant evidence, it may cautiously be suggested that oracular consultation declined as these forms of occult wisdom increased. The forms of divine access addressed here may not have *caused* Delphi to decline but, at the very least, demonstrate the types of sentiments, questions, and concerns people had during the decline of Delphi, which had changed over the course of Delphic operations. They reveal the sorts of issues with which people were concerned, and provide examples of the types of practices to which people progressively turned, just as Delphi was consulted less often.

Notes

- 1 All figures are rounded to the nearest per cent.
- 2 Homolle (1896), Parker (1985), Athanassiadi (1989), and Levin (1989) all note the substantial decline starting around AD 200.
- 3 Parker (1985), p. 320.
- 4 Plut. *De Pyth.*, or. 408b–c. See Chapter 2.
- 5 See *FD* 3.1.560; *SEG* 9.72 for examples.
- 6 Bonnechere (2013), p. 375.
- 7 Busine (2005), p. 11.
- 8 Kindt (2015), p. 273.
- 9 The responses deemed Historical, are defined as “those which appear in contemporary records; that is, the accepted probable date of the response [which] fell within the lifetime of the writer who attests it, or of the earliest writer when several attest it, or not long before the date of the inscription which records it.” He defines Quasi-Historical as “those which were allegedly spoken within historical times, i.e. after the legendary period, but which are, to our knowledge, first attested by a writer whose lifetime was later than the accepted or supposed date of the response.” Next, Legendary responses are “those which belong to admittedly legendary narratives, i.e., the traditional tales of events which were supposed to have taken place in the dim past, sometime before the eighth century B.C., and those which belong to timeless folktales and fables.” Finally, fictional responses are, “those invented by poets, dramatists, and romancers to serve their creative purpose,” Fontenrose (1978), pp. 7–9.
- 10 Fontenrose (1978), p. 7.
- 11 Johnston (2005), p. 286.
- 12 Nock (1928).
- 13 I am not the first to suggest that these forms of worship and divination contributed to the decline of Delphi; P&W, p. 375 suggest an influence of astrology on Delphi, Cumont (1956), p. 163 also mentions a connection between astrology and the decline of traditional divination; Levin (1989), p. 1599 also suggests this; and Parke (1967b), p. 141 suggests the rise of theurgy may have assisted in the decline of oracular divination. Here, I attempt to amplify these statements with evidence of preference, or at least potential preference, for the occult practices instead of Delphic consultation.
- 14 Dodds (1951), p. 179.
- 15 Kuhn (1970).
- 16 Kuhn (1970), p. 10.
- 17 Kuhn (1970), p. 10.

- 18 Kuhn (1970), p. 23.
- 19 Kuhn (1979), p. 52.
- 20 Many oracles from Delphi concerned the establishment and sanction of various aspects of traditional Greek religion, such as how to honor which gods appropriately, how best to conduct various religious observances, to which gods a temple should be erected, the best way to appease the gods in times of trouble and direct commands of cult and ritual practices. For examples of these see P&W responses 73; 85; 88; 90; 102; 104; 113; 114; 118; 124; 126; 125; 132; 138; 158; 164; 169; 179; 211; 226; 238; 239; 240; 241; 242; 243; 246; 256; 265; 279; 280; 281; 282; 283; 284; 285; 328; 330; 340; 341; 342; 343; 344; 345; 346; 347; 348; 349; 353; 354; 356; 383; 426; 427; 432; 433; 457; 458; 459; 464; 466; 467; 471; 508; 509; 529; 530; 533; 538; 540; 541; 545; 546; 554; 560; 566; and 573.

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1 The history of Delphi

εἶπατε τῷ βασιλεῖ, χαμαὶ πέσε δαίδαλος αὐλά.
οὐκέτι Φοῖβος ἔχει καλύβαν, οὐ μάντιδα δάφνην,
οὐ παγὰν λαλέουσιν. ἀπέσβετο καὶ ἄλλον ὕδωρ.

Tell the Emperor: the cunningly wrought courtyard has fallen;
Phoebus no longer holds the veil; nor the prophet[ic] laurel;
Nor the speaking spring, and the speaking water has dried up.¹

An unorthodox place to start an examination of Delphi is at the end. This is the Pythia's supposed last reply, addressed to Oribasios, Emperor Julian's personal physician, in c. AD 361/2. As the final extant oracular consultation, it marks the end of our record of prophecies issued at Delphi.² There is, however, an oracle issued regarding the birth of Honorius in AD 384 recorded by Claudian; he claims that the oracles of Ammon and Apollo at Delphi had been silent, but spoke again to inaugurate this occasion.³ Since the edicts forbidding oracular consultation had not yet been passed, it is possible that the oracle was still in operation. So there is no reason to deny that this oracle, or another one like it, could have been issued from Delphi in the fourth century AD. Despite the Christian sources for many of the late oracles, it is likely that the responses reflect a general fact that the oracle was still in operation to some degree. Still, not long after this response was issued, the oracular Apollo at Delphi was closed for good, one of the most symbolic ends to traditional Greek religion.

Shortly after these oracles were thought to have been issued, an edict of Theodosius Valentinian II and Arcadius closed all oracular temples and forbade all types of divination in AD 391.⁴ The summary of the law dictates that pagan sacrifice, worship of pagan idols, and worship in pagan temples is forbidden. The law further decrees that prosecutors of rank will be fined, but higher officials will pay a smaller amount than lower-ranking officials. Less than a decade later, an edict of Honorius and Arcadius closed all pagan temples and forbade sacrifices at any time and place.⁵ Still, it seems that the sanctuary at Delphi was not yet completely closed. A law passed in AD 424 suggests that the Pythian Games may still have been celebrated at that time, but it is likely that the oracles had stopped by then.⁶ The millennium-long practice, which

had advised on some of the most important moments in Greek history, was over. Oracles were silenced by a legislative mandate issued by a Christian Roman emperor. To understand this eventual fate of Delphi, it is important to examine the development of the oracle in terms of its religious and political significance.

Delphi in the Archaic Period

The sanctuary's rise to prominence can be attributed to several factors, which can be categorized generally as psychological, religious, political, and geographical. Delphi's ascent in a psychological sense can easily be understood in terms of prophecy and divination. Anxieties, fears, and desires have plagued humanity since time immemorial and when normal interaction with the world did not provide solutions to these problems new approaches were developed. People noticed that invisible forces dominated the world, caused rain to fall and plants to grow, seasons to change, and the sun to rise. In this way, appealing to the gods through ritual can be viewed as a reasonable solution to the various unknowns of humanity. The supremacy of Delphi, in a religious sense, can be seen best through the hierarchy of divinatory practitioners distinguished by the Greeks. Soothsayers and magicians initially worked for the community to satisfy the psychological needs of the Mediterranean. Eventually, the *polis* developed through a unification of various settlements and small villages, and this resulted in the establishment of stabilized communities in certain regions.⁷ With this came the development of various forms of public worship including festivals, feasts, and sacrifices, creating a comprehensive and communal form of worship that superseded private worship; it is within this context that Delphi was established. The central location of the oracle facilitated a number of consultants to visit the sanctuary with relative ease, particularly compared to Dodona or Siwah, which were far more remote than Delphi.⁸

Greek society began to appeal to the divine forces, agreed upon by the community, for help regarding various issues. Some of the earliest *poleis* to consult Delphi did so regarding important matters of state, which in turn helped to carve out a sort of "national" identity for the Greeks.⁹ Thus, the beginning of a Panhellenic sanctuary began its long history. Since there was never any unified political development in Greece within the *poleis*, the Panhellenic sanctuaries served as a gathering place for all of Greece. Individuals from different *poleis* could meet there to share art, knowledge, diplomacy, competition, religious experience and in this sense, a "national" Greek identity. Delphi became an important center for all of Greece, and it is through these means that it continued to develop into a significant institution.

The establishment of the Delphic oracle appears in three separate mythological accounts. Sadly, none of these versions agree and are difficult to reconcile, so it is best to examine the archeological evidence surrounding Delphi's foundation.¹⁰ Before the sanctuary gained Panhellenic status, the *polis* itself was already established, beginning in the Protogeometric period until c. 875/60

BC.¹¹ The Mycenaean (pre-*polis*) settlement at Delphi was extensive, but after the Mycenaean period, there is a gap of evidence until Delphi was “re-established” in the mid-ninth century, 60 years before monumental votives appeared. The emergence of votives suggests cult activity, but remained at a local level; it was not until the last quarter of the eighth century BC that oracular divination was developed.¹² From c. 800 BC, Corinthian interest at Delphi begins and further ties with northern regions in Greece were established, which helped strengthen relations with Thessaly. By the seventh century BC, consultations and dedications at Delphi are more extensive and constant; the sanctuary had gained Panhellenic status. However, Delphi is a particularly unique case regarding divination because, although the initiation of religious activity began on a local level, the sanctuary soon developed into a Panhellenic sensation. Here, the political aspect of Delphi’s rise to prominence becomes significant. Beginning with Corinth, Chalcis, and Sparta consulting the oracle in the eighth century BC, and Athens in the seventh century BC, Delphi became a tool for Greek communities to deal with unprecedented problems. As opposed to the interests of the elite, the problems were those of community, such as legislation, famine, drought, and over population. Many of these issues were brought to Delphi and often times the solution was colonization.

The importance of the topics as well as the inquirers presented to Apollo added to the fame and prestige of the oracle and the sanctuary, in particular colonization oracles, which allowed the cult of the Pythian Apollo to be spread throughout the Greek Mediterranean.¹³ Delphi also contributed to *polis*-formation by giving religious sanction to different problems raised by developing communities. Famously, Sparta’s *Rhetra* was approved by (or perhaps initiated by) Apollo at Delphi, and the consultation of Delphi on behalf of the Athenians regarding Cleisthenes and the Athenian Tribes.¹⁴ In this way, the needs and concerns of the elite were still important, but Delphi provided solutions to them within a communal context and this spread the fame and prestige of the oracle throughout many communities within Greece. Delphi, in time, became the religious authority of Greece and was sustained for centuries by this ancient tradition.

The political aspects of Delphi’s rise are intimately connected to the *polis*.¹⁵ Furthermore, the autonomy which Delphi enjoyed contributed to its long history. Several Sacred Wars were fought to preserve this independence and, early in Delphi’s operation, this degree of autonomy led to its success.¹⁶ Since the sanctuary was not bound by certain political alliances, the oracle quickly became a Panhellenic center open to Greeks and barbarians alike – many barbarians dedicated at Delphi, the first being the legendary King Midas of Phrygia, as well as Gyges and Croesus of Lydia.¹⁷ Indeed, Delphi was consulted by a variety of people and communities for several different reasons. The needs of consultants of Delphi are going to be different in the Archaic period from later periods. For example, the oracle was consulted frequently in the Archaic and Classical periods regarding colonization, however, by the Hellenistic period and beyond, the Mediterranean was largely settled, marginalizing one of the

initial roles of the oracle. Concerns which were once brought to Delphi – problems that could not be resolved by a community consensus – eventually become obsolete, as we shall see.

Method of consultation

Once the Panhellenic shrine was up and running, the method of consultation was secured. How exactly the oracle operated has been one of the most contentious aspects of Delphic inquiry. The mechanism for divination has particularly fascinated Delphic scholars since antiquity. Sadly, the ancient sources leave much to be desired, as they do not record the specifics concerning the procedure of the oracle – perhaps it was either too widely known to be relevant or interesting to an ancient audience. However, a general image is suggested from the sources: consultants would travel to Delphi, offer a sacrifice to Apollo, and ask the priestess, the Pythia, their question. The Pythia would then descend into the *adyton*, or forbidden place, and commune with the god below the floor of the temple. It is here that the details of consultation become problematic. The Pythia would receive her inspiration from the god, in one form or another, and relay the oracles to the inquirer, often in hexameter verse. This picture actually conjures up more questions than it answers: What happened in the *adyton*? What mechanisms were thought to be the inspiration for the Pythia's responses? And finally, how did the Pythia deliver these responses?

Most of these questions remain unanswered and speculative, but some elements may be revealed through our ancient sources. Parke and Wormell have outlined several key elements which seem to be necessary to Delphic oracular consultation, including the tripod, laurel leaves, and perhaps a vapor-emitting chasm as the source of the Pythia's inspiration.¹⁸ Additional elements of consultation include lot-oracles and the temple, particularly the *adyton*; none of these elements have been agreed upon by scholars.¹⁹ Following Parke, there are several elements to the mantic procedure at Delphi that are certainly necessary for oracular consultation. Although the exact nature and contribution of these elements are still unknown, it is worthwhile to examine the potential role in order to better understand the oracular procedure at Delphi. It seems that the tripod facilitated some symbolic connection between Apollo and the Pythia, and this is supported by the story of Heracles' theft of Apollo's tripod to set up a rival oracle.²⁰ The episode is also recorded on the east pediment of the Siphnian Treasury Frieze at Delphi. Certainly, the tripod has some sort of significance at Delphi, but, as Johnston has noted tripods "do not, in themselves, give forth prophecies; rather, they provide the *stimulus* for entering into a prophetic state."²¹ Likewise, the use of laurel may have also provided a stimulus for the mantic procedure. The Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* may even suggest that Apollo "speaks in answer from his laurel tree below the clearings of Parnassus," which is reminiscent of Zeus speaking from an oak tree at Dodona.²² The association of symbolic plants and tripods may not be peculiar to Delphi, but representative of oracular procedure in Greek thought.

One essential element to the mantic procedure at Delphi is Apollo's temple. Throughout Delphi's long history, there were several different manifestations of the temple and it played a significant role in the sanctuary, myth, and history.²³ The structure itself seems to be essential to oracular operations, particularly considering the apparent change to lot oracle during times of temple disrepair.²⁴ Although sacrifices were offered outside of the temple on the altar, the inner *adyton* of the temple was necessary for the oracular process. The Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* is our earliest account of the *adyton* at Delphi and gives the impression that the inner-most sanctuary is underground.²⁵ However, as Hollinshead has pointed out, subsequent references indicated that "the *adyton* and the temple could be spate structures, but the phrasing may also represent redundant metonymy."²⁶ Herodotus' account depicts the consultation of the Athenian envoy during the famous Wooden Wall episode, discussed below, which indicates the *adyton* was located within the *megaron* of the temple.²⁷ The literary evidence makes it clear that oracular inspiration consistently occurred in the *adyton* of Apollo's temple at Delphi, but exactly where and how it functioned is less clear.²⁸ Sadly, the impression given by the written accounts has not been confirmed by the archeological record and French archaeologists found no definitive *adyton* at the site.²⁹ The consistency with which the ancient authors describe the mantic session occurring in the *adyton* may not be confirmed, but there is little reason to doubt the Pythia pronounced her prophecies in the inner-most sanctuary of Apollo's temple. The more contentious issue is the supposed vapors which later authors thought to have been emitted there.

Many ancient authors describe a vapor-emitting chasm at Delphi as the source of the Pythia's divine inspiration. Likewise, the supposed chasm at Delphi has attracted much attention from scholars of various fields in the last century. Suspicion arises when one considers all the literary sources as late and inconsistent.³⁰ Recent geological studies have added to the confusion regarding the chasm theory, suggesting there are natural features of the sanctuary that may allow for some type of gas to be released from the earth.³¹ Although the scientific nature of these studies is compelling, the theory seems to satisfy our modern, rational minds more than corroborate the archeological and historical evidence. For the Greeks, there were several mechanisms available to assist with oracular prophecy and no need for a psychoactive substance to do the trick. Many of the concerns of modern scholars would have been taken for granted by the Greeks.

For example, the use of a spring to assist in oracular production is likely. Sacred space was certainly a concern to the Greeks; indeed, many oracles were founded in areas of particular natural beauty such as caves, mountains, or springs.³² Many sources mention the Castalian spring, which is located near the temple, and two fountains fed by the spring still stand today. Natural phenomena were thought to provide enhanced access to the gods, and so oracular sites often utilized these features within their sacred space. This is true of Delphi and other oracular sites, including Didyma and Claros addressed in Chapters 4

and 5. These natural mechanisms alone are sufficient for oracular authenticity, and so perhaps vaporous chasms are redundant.

At Delphi, the most crucial element of oracular prophecy is the Pythia. It was this priestess to whom consultants directed their questions, and she delivered the oracles back to the consultants – she was the conduit of Apollo’s message. Modern scholars have debated the role she plays and many argue that vital political decisions would not be left to a woman, and so it is the priests at Delphi who issue the oracles in hexameter verse.³³ This idea has been challenged artfully by Maurizio who points out that “not one ancient source suggests that anyone other than the Pythia issued oracular responses.”³⁴ From inscriptional evidence, other attendants were present in the *adyton* with the inquirer and the Pythia including *hosios* (ὅσιος) and *hierous* (ιερεὺς).³⁵ The term *prophetes* (προφήτης) appears in literature, but is not found in Delphic inscriptions. Like all aspects of oracular procedure at Delphi, the exact role of the Pythia and her attendants is unclear. What does emerge from our sources is that a consultant, after being purified and offering a sacrifice, joins the Pythia and her attendants in the *adyton*. There, they ask the Pythia a question (often in the sanctioning language), “is it better and more good?” (λῶον καὶ ἄμεινον ἔστι) to do X, and the Pythia provides the oracle either in verse or prose.³⁶

Although many questions still remain (such as how exactly does a likely uneducated woman produce hexameter verse on the spot? Or what is the exact mechanism for prophesy?). I think it is more pertinent to remember that the Greeks had no issue with these conundrums. For them, there was no problem in the fact that a woman was engaging in significant stately matters because she was the mouthpiece of Apollo. For modern critics, there is no question as to whether or not Apollo spoke at Delphi as there is little belief in the Olympian gods, yet the question of the Pythia’s inspiration is as important as ever. This seems out of place since, although there is little doubt that divination is a cultural tool, rather than a confirmed reality, we still ask how the process worked. Ultimately, we may never understand how the Greeks understood or practiced divination. One thing remains clear – the Pythia was seen as the essential element to the oracular procedure at Delphi. She provided guidance on religious, political, and personal concerns. After the Archaic period, the Delphic oracle continued to play an integral role in the affairs of the Greeks.

Delphi during the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars

An examination of Delphi’s role during the Persian wars will give a good indication of Delphi at its height of popularity and influence. Much of this comes from Herodotus who had a fascination with oracles, and Delphi in particular, in his *Histories*, published between 430 and 425 BC. Of the 64 prophetic incidents referred to by Herodotus, 46 come from recognized oracular centers; of these, 34 are from Delphi, and of the rest no more than two come from any other single source.³⁷ Several famous stories of Delphi come from Herodotus, such as the Wooden Wall and the Test of Croesus, and attest the wide fame

possessed by the sanctuary during his time.³⁸ Herodotus does not record the oracles blindly; he is aware of the possibility that oracles might be “recycled” or invented *post eventum*.³⁹ He is careful to avoid saying anything against the oracles, nor does he make a judgement about whether or not they are true – he merely reports what he hears.⁴⁰ Herodotus also describes the many votive offerings dedicated at Delphi by various *poleis*, demonstrating the wealth of the sanctuary and communal appreciation held for it.⁴¹ Herodotus clearly had a fascination with, and respect for, Delphi. His writings would have increased the popularity of the oracle. Indeed, his account covering the Persian Wars correlates with a high point in Delphic history.

It is clear that to Herodotus, Delphi played a significant role in the Persian War and, specifically, played a hand in the Greek victory. In fact, Herodotus gives Delphi particularly “good press” throughout his work, despite the rumors of the oracle “medizing” and supporting the Persian cause. The suspicion cast on Delphi comes from the famous Wooden Wall incident; two oracles were given to the Athenians on the eve of Xerxes invasion – the first, telling the Athenians to flee, and the other claiming that a “wooden wall” will provide safety to the city.⁴² This is one of the most famous oracles in the Delphic corpus and is significant in many ways, not only for our history of the Persian Wars and Delphi’s involvement, but also significant to Herodotus himself. It is the longest of the oracles he records, and it begins his treatment of Xerxes’ invasion. Certain scholars, following these passages from Herodotus, claim that Delphi had failed to forecast the future and it was the first prediction of a Greek defeat which tarnished Delphi’s reputation. The claim rests largely on two premises: first, the oracle which the Pythia initially gave to Athens, suggesting that they flee rather than remain and fight; and second, the argument that Delphi had medized along with the majority of the Amphictyonic members, and even allied with Persian forces.⁴³ Nine of twelve members of the Amphictyonic League were thought to have medized since Apollo’s sanctuary was unharmed during the destruction of many other sanctuaries in Phocis.⁴⁴ These ideas are still found in the works of Parke. He claims that Delphi perhaps had a secret alliance with the Persians, and later suggests that Delphi had “changed sides” throughout the course of the war.⁴⁵ However, he cites no ancient evidence to support this claim.

More recent scholarship has reflected this lack of evidence. It has been suggested that the Pythia’s initial reply to the Athenians was understandable, and even fitting, given the circumstances.⁴⁶ Indeed, there is no strong evidence, external to this oracle, to suggest that Delphi had sympathized with the Persians during the war, and the response given to the Greeks during the Persian War was a faithful depiction of Delphi as an enigmatic source of guidance. Furthermore, after the first oracle issued to the Athenians, Apollo issued a second oracle, that of the Wooden Wall, which was favorable and, in the end, assisted the Greek cause.⁴⁷ Additionally, there is another oracle that suggests Apollo was on the side of the Greeks: the god told Aristides that he would be victorious if he and the Greeks were to fight Mardonius at Plataea.⁴⁸

There is evidence countering the claim that the Amphictyony was thought to have medized because Delphi was unscathed during Xerxes' invasion. Ctesias, the late fifth century historian, tells us that Xerxes had sent part of his force to capture Delphi, but a landslide caused by a thunderstorm prevented them from sacking the place.⁴⁹ Plutarch even says that the temple was burned down during this war.⁵⁰ If Delphi was on the side of the Persians, it is unlikely that such a fate would be in store. Indeed, the Greeks had a positive perception of Delphi after the Persian Wars, demonstrated by reverent dedication. In the aftermath of the war, the Greeks offered many dedications to Delphi to show their gratitude and respect; one of the most illustrious is the golden tripod of Plataea and the portico of the Athenians. The Greeks even consulted Apollo to determine whether their dedications were sufficient for Apollo.⁵¹ Many of the treasuries at Delphi were constructed after the Persian War, which also attests to the wealth of offerings made at Delphi.⁵² This suggests that Delphi was not viewed negatively after the Persian War.

However, although the *perception* of Delphi remained intact, Homolle did notice a change in *function* of the oracle. He observed a decline in political consultations which begins after the Persian War.⁵³ This may lead one to assume that the reason people no longer consulted Delphi on important state matters was due to the sanctuary's alliances during the Persian War. Still, important issues *were* presented to Delphi in the following decades and centuries. For example, after 385 BC, there are two extant oracles which concerned important state matters, one regarding Tiribazos' contemplated revolt against Artaxerxes II and another regarding the sending of a colony.⁵⁴ Indeed the sanctuary continued to operate normally throughout the so-called Second Sacred War.

In the middle of the fifth century BC, Phocis seized the sanctuary of Apollo during the Second Sacred War.⁵⁵ By this time, Athens had gained political influence throughout much of Greece, including Phocis, and the political advantage of this region, particularly influence over Delphi, motivated Athens to assist Phocis in its efforts to control the sanctuary. Phocis, with help from Athens, briefly took control of the sanctuary. In 449 BC the Spartans came directly to the aid of Delphi, expelled the invaders, and restored Delphi to its previous condition.⁵⁶ For their assistance, the Spartans were awarded *promanteia*, the right to consult the oracle before all other *poleis*.⁵⁷ Yet, as soon as they returned home the Athenians, under Pericles, returned control to Phocis and were granted *promanteia* in turn.⁵⁸ Although conflict surrounding the control over Delphi ensued, the oracle seems to have continued to operate, offering the highest honors to both Sparta and Athens, which demonstrates Apollo's sense of "balance" despite conflict during this time. More importantly, it shows Apollo's political judgment; despite conflicts between two key patrons, Apollo attempted to keep both powers happy in order to maintain good relations with each side.

In 431 BC, Sparta claimed that Athens had broken the Thirty Years' Peace and began the three decades-long Peloponnesian War. The Spartans consulted

Delphi to determine if it was better for them to go to war with Athens. Thucydides reports that Apollo responded that “if they put their whole strength into the war, victory would be theirs, and the promise that he [Apollo] himself would be with them, whether invoked or uninvoked.”⁵⁹ As this is a forceful utterance from Delphi, it is likely that the sanctuary sided with Sparta because, only 20 years earlier, Sparta helped restore Delphi’s autonomy. Fontenrose asserts that this demonstrates Delphi’s partisanship for the Spartans.⁶⁰

Indeed, there is some evidence to demonstrate the pro-Spartan bias and lends support to the Athenian response. With very little evidence that Athens consulted Delphi during this time, it is possible to conclude that they boycotted Delphi and chose Dodona, a less politically active oracle, to settle their divinatory questions.⁶¹ The Athenians consulted Dodona before the Sicilian expedition during 415–413 BC and Zeus supported their expedition which ultimately ended in failure; Dodona was later exonerated through ambiguous phrasing, and the sources suggest that Athens misinterpreted the oracle. Pausanias explains: “The Athenians received an oracle from Dodona ordering them to colonize Sicily, and Sicily is a small hill not far from Athens. But they, not understanding the order, were persuaded to undertake expeditions overseas, especially the Syracusan war.”⁶² Although Athens was apparently wary of consulting the Delphic oracle, the city still dedicated to Apollo at Delphi after the conflict was over.⁶³ So although it may appear that Athens was cautious of Delphic consultation, the apprehension could not have been so severe as to prohibit them from honoring Apollo; their normal relationship was restored afterwards.

Parke noticed that the pro-Spartan oracle during the Peloponnesian War “was almost the last time when the Pythian Apollo was consulted on a major question of policy, which had no connection with cult or ritual.”⁶⁴ This broad statement needs clarification, as the oracle continued to receive political questions, albeit, never again from Athens.⁶⁵ This could be seen as apprehension on Athens’ behalf to consult Delphi regarding important matters, considering Delphi had scorned them before. However, after the war, Athens lost power and influence in Greece and *this* could be the reason they no longer consulted Delphi regarding important state matters: their political issues were not as pressing as they had been previously. This argument is supported by the fact that Athens did continue to consult the oracle regarding religious matters, several times between 421 and 415 BC.⁶⁶

The era between the Persian War and the end of the Peloponnesian War (c. 450–400 BC) was a time when Delphi, as a sanctuary, enjoyed a period of prosperity. During the century between the Persian Wars and the accidental destruction of the temple in 373 BC, the sanctuary at Delphi was experiencing its most impressive times. The Pythian Games were perhaps at their peak only decades before the end of the Peloponnesian War and the oracle was still consulted frequently.⁶⁷ P&W catalogue 142 oracles (approximately 22% of the entire corpus), ranging from the end of the Peloponnesian War until the destruction of the temple in 373 BC. This attests to the number of visitors who

travelled to the site. This inconsistency, on the one hand a decline in the frequency of political and significant matters, while on the other hand a continued presence at Delphi, is an issue addressed in Chapter 3.

After the Peloponnesian War, Sparta had become the pre-eminent *polis* in Greece and continued to associate with Delphi. However, after King Agesipolis consulted Delphi (and Olympia) in 388 BC regarding their invasion of Argos, Sparta no longer consulted Delphi on matters of war.⁶⁸ Indeed, questions of war and politics witnessed a steeper decline in this period than after the Persian War. For example, in 371 BC the war with Thebes seemed imminent. Although there were signs from Delphi to warn the Spartans they would be defeated, Cicero tells us that the most important warning came from Dodona; Sparta consulted the oracle at Dodona regarding the war instead of Delphi.⁶⁹ Indeed, it was Thebes who consulted Delphi, and this may demonstrate a decreased alliance between Sparta and Delphi and could be what motivated Sparta to seek oracular guidance elsewhere. It could be seen as a sign of the shift in political importance from Sparta to Thebes.⁷⁰ Although Parker regards this as a reflection of Xenophon's assertion that Greek custom forbade consulting the gods or oracles regarding war against fellow Greeks, external forces also contributed to the decline in political consultation at this time.⁷¹

The decrease in consultation is most likely explained, following Arnush, by the destruction of Apollo's temple only two years before.⁷² Oracular consultation was surely interrupted during this time, as the temple, complete with *adyton* and tripod, was essential to the oracular procedure at Delphi. Additionally, an inscription from c.344/343 BC testifies to the desire and necessity for the Amphictyony to finish building quickly so that consultants could be accommodated in the proper, auspicious month.⁷³ The inscription records a hymn to Dionysus, by one Philodamus. It further indicates that the Amphictyony received an oracle encouraging them to pay homage to Apollo. Although construction of the temple is not explicitly stated, some form of building had to be finished before the celebration. Even though the temple was not yet complete, renovations in other areas of the sanctuary were being carried out, such as the new shelter built in 343 BC for consultants in the absence of a working temple.⁷⁴ This demonstrates that the oracle *did* still operate in some form, but it is likely that the traditional method was not employed due to the destruction.

Evidence suggests that perhaps lot oracles were in use at Delphi during this time. In 352 BC, Athens consulted Delphi concerning the sacred land at Eleusis.⁷⁵ On a tin plate, the Athenians inscribed one possible outcome, that it is better for them to build a portico and repair the goddess' sanctuary; on another plate, the opposite was inscribed, that it is better for the land within the sacred *orgas* to remain unworked. The inscription describes the procedure in such detail as to suggest that the practice was uncommon.⁷⁶ This binary response is not typical of the Pythia at Delphi, who often uttered hexameter oracles. Parker claims that this unprecedented method may indicate a suspicion of the oracle; Athens did not want to leave any other possibilities open to

Apollo.⁷⁷ However, considering the state of the temple, and its necessity for consultation, the lot-oracle may have simply been an improvisation. Additionally, it is unlikely that this method of prophecy was any less revered than the ecstasy of the Pythia, because in the end it is Apollo's will which guides the response at his most renowned of oracles.

Although the oracular aspect had been put on hold after the destruction of the temple, Delphi continued to be a seat of Greek politics. In 368 BC Philiscus of Abydos attempted to reconcile Greek *poleis* by organizing a peace conference, and Delphi was chosen as the neutral ground for the discussion.⁷⁸ The fact that the site was chosen for such an important matter shows the continued significance of the sanctuary in the eyes of the vast majority of Greeks, however "while the delegates were engaged in debating peace at Delphi, they never communicated their difficulty to Apollo."⁷⁹ The practice of consulting Delphi did continue, but the perception of the sanctuary as the utmost arbiter of Greek politics had declined. Delphic responses were still regarded as Apollo's direct word and it was, in this sense, a significant religious sanctuary. However, the god was increasingly bypassed as a political guide.

Delphi and Macedon

Delphi was not immune to Aegean politics, despite the indifference to political matters shown by the oracle. In 355 BC, the sanctuary found itself in the midst of another Sacred War. This was the third in a series of such wars over the control of Delphi and the sanctuary of Apollo throughout the Archaic and Classical periods. The Phocians seized the sanctuary and a battle over Delphi ensued; the Amphictyony, led largely by Thebes and later Philip of Macedon, sought to defeat Phocis and restore autonomy to Delphi.

To understand the circumstances of this conflict, some background is needed. First, the position of authority gained by Thebes after defeating Sparta at the Battle of Leuctra (371 BC) is a significant aspect. The *polis* became one of the most powerful in Greece and also one of the most dominant entities in the Amphictyonic League. Also significant are the enduring tensions between Phocis and Delphi. Although Delphi was geographically part of Phocis, it was politically independent of the Phocian Confederacy. This was a significant contribution to the Sacred Wars with Phocis.⁸⁰ The location of Delphi within Phocis' sphere of influence motivated the latter to capitalize on the wealth and significance of the sanctuary, and it was in a position to influence access to the sanctuary. Additionally, Delphi maintained strong ties with the Amphictyony (represented by Thebes, Boeotia, Thessaly, Locris, Doris, and Macedon at this time), the governing body at the sanctuary, and it is this league which sought to defend the sanctuary's autonomy and their role within it.

The Third Sacred War (356–346 BC) was harsher than the previous wars surrounding Delphi and arguably had the most significant of outcomes. The war certainly had its beginnings a decade or so before a definite conflict broke out, but the actual war began when Philomelos persuaded his fellow Phocians

to seize the sanctuary of Apollo.⁸¹ The Amphictyonic League, dominated by Thebes at this point, declared war on Phocis and her notable allies, Sparta and Athens. Although this is a significant war, the focus of our concern is the impact on Delphi itself.⁸² Athens and Sparta, who had previously fought to maintain Delphic autonomy as well as preserve the religious inviolability of the shrine, now sided with Phocis, the aggressors against Delphi. The sanctuary of Apollo had lost the inviolability which it had held in the past – much of the artwork stored at the sanctuary was melted down to provide Phocis with the gold and silver needed to fund the war, decreasing the wealth of the sanctuary.⁸³

One of the most significant outcomes of the Third Sacred War was that Philip II became a major power in Greek politics. It was he who brought the Sacred War to an end, using his Macedonian army to subdue Phocis and her allies in 346 BC. Justin describes Philip's respect for Apollo: during one of the last battles of the war he "ordered all his soldiers to adorn themselves with laurel wreaths and so made his way into battle as if the god himself were the commander."⁸⁴ Philip controlled Greece and the Amphictyonic League, as he held the Macedonian votes as well as those from Thessaly and northern Greece within the League. With the defeat of Athens and Thebes, at the Battle of Chaeronea in 338 BC, the traditional Amphictyonic members had lost much of their control in Greece, and neither Thebes nor Athens held supremacy. With his control over the Amphictyony, Philip controlled Delphi. The autonomy of Delphi was removed, and control passed into the hands of outsiders.

Philip's relationship with Delphi was largely positive. After gaining control of the Amphictyony, he exiled Stratocles and Philon, two pro-Athenian politicians, dedicated their confiscated goods and gave them to Apollo. He also received this oracle from the Pythia, although the context is unknown: "Fight with silver spears and you will conquer all things."⁸⁵ This further demonstrates Philip's positive relations with Delphi. His connection with the oracle, however, led to suspicion from other parties. Demosthenes criticized the anti-Athenian attitude of Delphi, which stemmed from their loss of *promanteia*, claiming that "the Pythia is Philippizing" (Πυθίαν φιλιππίζειν).⁸⁶ There are no extant responses which justify Demosthenes' claim. Still, this is the first instance in the literature of the time which overtly testifies to Delphi's bias or allegiances. Such comments become more frequent with each passing century, as we shall see.

Macedonian control over Delphi is also typified by the story of Alexander the Great's consultation there. When he went to Delphi to consult the oracle about his campaigns in Asia, he arrived on an inauspicious day when the Pythia was not prophesying. Determined to get a response, Alexander

...went up himself and tried to drag her to the temple, whereupon, as if overcome by his ardor, she said: 'You are invincible, boy! (παῖ)' On hearing this, Alexander said he desired no further prophecy, but had from her the oracle which he wanted.⁸⁷

Even though it was such a man as Alexander the Great who could manipulate the Pythia in this manner, the story, however exaggerated, reflects the control Macedonia exerted over the Pythia and the oracle.

It was not that Alexander had little respect for oracles; he supposedly revived the oracle at Didyma in 334 BC and got his divine sanction from Ammon at Siwah.⁸⁸ It is significant that the sanction of his divine rule came from Zeus Ammon rather than Delphi; however, this could be explained by the fact that Alexander was already in Egypt when he set off to consult Ammon. After Alexander consulted Delphi inauspiciously, he never returned to Greece, and so his relations with Delphi were minimal.⁸⁹ Alexander's interest in Didyma and Siwah could stem from the fact that they lie at the margins of the Greek world, which were quickly becoming the focus of the Macedonian Empire. Delphi's political influence now began to diminish and this becomes more significant when one considers that it was Delphi specifically, rather than oracles generally, which played a lesser role in politics.

The reign of Alexander is contemporaneous with the completion of Apollo's temple. After several decades, the reconstruction had been delayed by the Third and Fourth Sacred Wars, but was finally consecrated in 330 BC.⁹⁰ Despite the eventual efforts to rebuild the temple, there is no evidence to suggest that the completion led to any increase in oracular activity at the site, either private or public.⁹¹ This is, in part, due to the drastic changes occurring in Greece during this time.

The prevalence of Macedon and the conquests of Alexander created a new era for Greece. The *polis* ceased to maintain independence as it had in the past; although the *polis* system did not completely end, it was no longer the essential political structure of Greece. The common opinion of much of the scholarship concerning Greek *poleis* asserts that the *polis* system ended with the Macedonian conquest of Greece, pinpointing the battle of Chaeronea as the exact moment of decline.⁹² This distinction is far too black and white to truly reflect the socio-political climate of the time, for the *polis*, as the Greeks thought of and used the term, continued through the Hellenistic and Roman periods.⁹³ The Macedonian occupation of Greece represents the beginning of the end of the traditional *polis* system, and thereby the traditional socio-political structure of much of Greece. The end of the *polis*, Fontenrose maintains, parallels the end of Delphi.⁹⁴

Delphi as a *polis* did seem to offer resistance to Alexander and the Macedonians, late in his reign. The Amphictyony, in the spring of 323 BC, did not seat the representatives of Alexander on the Delphic Council, and, during this same year, did not uphold the decree made three years earlier which promised that money would be set aside to purchase crowns to honor Olympias, Alexander's mother. Perhaps, as Arnush notes, Delphi's discomfort with Macedonian rule had become intense enough to dishonor both Alexander and his mother in the same year.⁹⁵ Macedonia's dominance began to diminish after the death of Alexander in 323 BC. There are many significant factors that contribute to the decline of Macedonian hegemony: the invasion of the Gauls in 279 BC and

Alexander's successors account for much of the decline of Macedonian dominance.⁹⁶ Bosworth argues, rather, that it was Alexander's military demands in the last years of his life, which drained Macedonian sources in Greece and Macedonia, that led to the decline.⁹⁷ Also, the rise of Rome certainly played a large role in the events in Greece, as we shall see below.

The Hellenistic era is of pivotal significance in the history of Delphi. The spread of Hellenism throughout the known world, particularly in Asia and Egypt, created multicultural regions with large cities such as Alexandria, Pergamon, Seleucia, and Antioch. This political and social structure inaugurated a new era for the eastern Mediterranean, in both political and religious terms. Delphi was no longer the center of the known world, and therefore ceased to function as the arbiter of the same issues as it had done in the past. One of the reasons for this is seen in the tendency, beginning with the reign of Alexander and continuing through many of his successors, for kings to take on a soteriological nature, that is, to be thought of as Savior (Σωτήρ). Other epithets are worth noting, such as Epiphanes (Ἐπιφανής) and Euergetes (Εὐεργέτης), which create the impression of divine sanction and good will. Several political leaders became increasingly associated with gods and they began to exert more influence over oracular sites. This is seen as early as Philip's relationship with Delphi: once he gained control over the Delphic Amphictyony due to his assistance in the Third Sacred War he controlled the oracle and could be assured that the oracles issued were consistent with his policies. Alexander, likewise, gained influence over Egypt in Siwah after the oracle professed his divinity. Tarn highlighted the impact this trend had on Delphi and oracles generally. He maintains that while Greeks had been accustomed to seeking help from Zeus or Apollo in times of disaster, they would get a much more immediate response, in terms of supplies and relief workers, from, for example, Ptolemy Soter.⁹⁸ Kings promoted themselves as "saviors" and the oracles gave divine backing for their political ends; the kings needed control of an oracle to maintain their status, and oracles needed to align themselves with the current political leader. This necessity for oracular control can help us to understand later events in Delphic history.

The fourth and third centuries BC began to see a decline in certain political questions presented at Delphi – questions which concern important governmental and administrative matters of state. One of the reasons was the new form of political control created by Alexander's conquests, which did not necessitate the authority of an outside source. Rather than the gods, the political leader himself made the decisions after being sanctioned by the traditional oracles. Philip and Alexander both used Delphi and Ammon, respectively, to further their political ambitions through traditional religious sanction. By the time of Alexander's successors, there was a tendency to skip the oracular sanction. Demetrius Poliorcetes was said to have claimed that his own words should be treated as oracles; Plutarch tells us in his biography of the Macedonian king:

But there was one honor proposed for Demetrius which was more strange and monstrous than any other. Dromocleides the Sphettian moved, when

the dedication of certain shields at Delphi was in question, that the Athenians should get an oracle from Demetrius.⁹⁹

Here, Plutarch tells us of the impious attitude of Dromocleides, and we see as well a glimpse of a less than positive perception of Delphi. In the past, only the correct interpretation of a Delphic response had been open to question; now, several aspects of Delphic operation were under scrutiny. Apollo's advice, at least according to Dromocleides, was at least as valuable as decrees from Demetrius. Finally, in the Hellenistic era, this trend is reflected in the extant responses. Fewer questions, in general, date to this period and beyond, and the majority concern personal matters rather than significant stately or administrative concerns.

Delphi and the Aetolians

The beginning of the third century BC brought another change to the political climate at Delphi: it fell into hands of Aetolians. As Parke notes, "this outrage, which in earlier times would have provoked a Sacred War, passed as a mere incident in the dynastic struggles of the period."¹⁰⁰ After the siege on the sanctuary by the Gauls in 279 BC, the Aetolians attempted to increase their sway in Greece through the power of the Panhellenic shrine. To do so, they claimed credit for expelling the Gauls and saving Delphi; through this self-proclaimed soteriological role, the Aetolians promoted their authority within Delphi. The first evidence of an attack from Gaul is found in an inscription from Cos which dates to the first half of 278 BC. Significantly, this decree emphasizes Apollo's role in defeating the Gauls.¹⁰¹ Yet 30 years later, in 245 BC, the Aetolians reorganized the annual Soteria festival, which was initiated by the Amphictyony, into a larger penteteric festival as a commemoration of their efforts in expelling the Gauls – with no mention of Apollo.¹⁰² This and five other decrees attest the propaganda efforts on behalf of the Aetolians which run counter to the original tradition in which divine intervention is emphasized; their goal was to portray themselves as saviors of Delphi while gaining control over the sanctuary and, in turn, influence and power in Greece.¹⁰³

This political manipulation of the sanctuary could not have been viewed favorably. Pausanias explains: "They [the Gauls] were opposed by the Delphians themselves and the Phocians of the cities around Parnassus."¹⁰⁴ This is another instance in which religious reverence is trumped by political motives and which could have added to the suspicion of Delphi. The autonomy of the sanctuary was no longer of the utmost importance. The literary reports suggest that the perception of Delphi was slipping in significance. The traditional values seem to become a mere side note to the political dealings, and this, in turn, marginalizes Apollo's influence. It is the political powers which have control, not the god.

Crucially for consultation at Delphi, the Aetolian occupation could have prevented certain citizens and *poleis* from consulting there. Plutarch notes that

in 290 BC, after the Aetolians had established themselves at Delphi, Demetrius Poliorcetes had to celebrate the Pythian Games at Athens.¹⁰⁵ At this time he controlled Boeotia, which was at war with the Aetolians, and was not able to reach Delphi. This implies that the Aetolians controlled the routes to Delphi, at least those in western Phocis which connected Boeotia to the sanctuary. Other groups or citizens, hostile to the Aetolians, may not have been permitted to travel to Delphi, and this could have had the effect of prohibiting several consultations there.¹⁰⁶

The Aetolian dominance at Delphi lasted until 189 BC, when they fell from power in the aftermath of the Battle of Thermopylae. In the following decades, they maintained their presence at Delphi through their votes in the Amphictyonic League, but Athens and Thessaly had gained the dominant position there, at the expense of the Delphians. These political shifts at the sanctuary began to take their toll on the oracle; the decline in political oracles at this time is nearly absolute.

Delphi and Rome

In the third century BC, Apollo issued the last responses of any political consequence and, significantly, Rome was one of the last of these inquirers. Although the following instances were more religious in nature than political, the circumstances stem from the political climate of the time and impact the community as a whole, so I include them in the examination. One of the final political oracles was delivered during the Punic War with Hannibal of 216 BC. This account is recorded by Livy, Plutarch, and Appian.¹⁰⁷ According to Plutarch, in addition to the standard Roman practice, Fabius Pictor was sent to consult the oracle at Delphi as a further precaution during the battle of Cannae. He was instructed to inquire about various inauspicious omens and as a result, all the proper sacrifices were performed and the gods appropriately honored as prescribed by the augurs.¹⁰⁸ Rome, during its most perilous times, viewed Delphi as a place for advice and help in the face of danger. The context offered by Plutarch, since he does not record the question or the answer, seems to suggest that it was of a religious nature, perhaps a question of which gods to sacrifice in order to defeat Hannibal. Plutarch records it as one of the steps Pictor took to calm the Romans about their fears of the impending battle, and to appease the gods.

Although Plutarch does not record the oracle itself, we can supplement Plutarch with the account from Livy. He records Pictor's orders to consult Apollo, his return, and the oracle which he brought back. Translated from Greek verse and written down, it describes which gods to honor and in what way:

If you do this [honor certain gods appropriately], Romans, your affairs will be more prosperous and less perplexed; your state will proceed more agreeably to your wishes; and the victory in the war will be on the side of the Roman people. After your state shall have been restored to prosperity

and safety, send a present to the Pythian Apollo out of the gains you have earned, and pay honors to him out of the plunder, the booty, and the spoils. Banish licentiousness from among you.¹⁰⁹

Apollo is explicitly on the side of the Romans – the ties with Delphi were already strong enough to gain this direct, positive oracle.¹¹⁰ This is significant in several ways: it is “the first historically reliable notice of a consultation of Apollo’s oracle at Delphi by the Romans in Plutarch.”¹¹¹ Fabius Pictor, the representative sent to Delphi, was himself a famous Roman historian, so it can be assumed Plutarch and Livy found this account in his writings. Since Livy also puts such an emphasis on the oracle, it seems that the Roman tradition is quite strong in this instance.

The oracle from Delphi must have been seen as a turning point of the war. Dumézil regards this as “a long-range treaty of alliance between Rome and the Delphic god.”¹¹² This consultation at Delphi became important for the development of Apollo’s cult at Rome. A few years later, in 212 BC, the *Ludi Apollinares* were established at Rome to honor the god who had helped them defeat their enemies.¹¹³ Already in Greece, political issues were left to the decision of the occupiers, Macedonian, Aetolian, or Roman, and they would decide whether or not to consult Apollo. A few years later, in 210 BC, Delphi was consulted to approve legislation of the Eretrians.¹¹⁴ These are the last few times Delphi played any significant role in Aegean politics.

This trend continued throughout the Roman era. Roman occupation of Greece certainly changed the role of Delphi in political matters. Since the authority of political judgments no longer rested with the Greek *poleis* or Macedon, decision-making was now left to Rome. Delphi’s role as sanction and authority diminished further, along with Greek independence, once Rome gained control over Greece in 146 BC. This is a significant turning point in Greece, as parts were left “free” while the rest became the province of Achaia.¹¹⁵ Delphi maintained good relations with Rome and appealed to the Senate in times of trouble. This is seen in inscriptional evidence which records that the sacred funds of Apollo were misappropriated or mismanaged; the issue was presented to the Amphictyonic League who, in turn, sought retribution from the Senate at Rome around 125 BC.¹¹⁶ It is striking that Apollo was not consulted in this instance, so, although the oracle was not consistently appealed to by the Roman state, the sanctuary itself was an important political center. During this time, the oracle was still consulted but most of the inquiries concerned the appropriate worship of various gods or other religious prescriptions. In this sense, the governmental and administrative dimension of Delphi’s political involvement had ended.

The next century was particularly tumultuous for Delphi. Greece was suffering in the throes of Roman wars; Sulla sacked the temple of Apollo and all its accumulated riches to fund the war with Mithridates in 87 or 86 BC.¹¹⁷ Although this was not the first time Apollo’s treasures had been used to fund a war, it demonstrates the capacity for political initiatives to trump religious

reverence. Sulla did, however, repay the funds he took. After his decisive victory at Orchomenos, Sulla “took away half of their [Thebes’] territory and consecrated it to Pythian Apollo and Olympian Zeus, giving orders that from its revenues the moneys should be paid back to the gods which he had taken from them.”¹¹⁸ Despite Sulla’s plundering, he still proved to be a religious devotee in the end. The initial “loan” is indicative of the perception of Delphi; the vast funds in the treasuries could be used by whoever was in charge. Although the treasure was not necessarily considered Apollo’s property, it was in his keeping. Others, such as Phaÿllus, the Phocian leader in the Third Sacred War, had been removed from office for such an offense.¹¹⁹ It is particularly striking that a Roman appropriated Apollo’s funds, which surely would not have sat well with the Delphians or the rest of Greece.

A few years later, northern tribes, either Thracians or Illyrians, sacked Delphi. The temple was burned in 83 BC and was likely still severely damaged by AD 42.¹²⁰ Indeed, Strabo notes: “The temple, too, has been much neglected, though in earlier times it was held in exceedingly great honor.”¹²¹ The temple, so crucial for oracular divination at Delphi, was neglected once again. Greece generally, and Delphi specifically, did not have enough available funds to rebuild the temple and the religious center of Greece had fallen by the wayside.

This is further demonstrated by the literary evidence of the period. Cicero’s *De Divinatione*, published in late 45 BC, is our first explicit literary indication of Delphi’s increasing marginality,

...the oracle at Delphi never would have been so much frequented, so famous, and so crowded with offerings from people and kings of every land, if all ages had not tested the truth of its prophecies. For a long time now that has not been the case. Therefore, as at present its glory has waned because it is no longer noted for the truth of its prophecies, so formerly it would not have enjoyed so exalted a reputation if it had not been trustworthy in the highest degree.¹²²

Although the philosophical nature of this dialogue makes it difficult to discern the actual sentiments of Cicero – what he states in Book I, by proxy of Quintus, he often refutes in Book II – it can be suggested that this method brings out varying opinions held by different people at the time. However, in regard to the decline of Delphi, he affirms the phenomenon in Book II: “But what is the reason why Delphic oracles...are not uttered at the present time and have not been for a long time? And why are they regarded with the utmost contempt?”¹²³ It is clear that Delphi was in a state of deterioration by the first century BC, both in terms of consultations given and the perception of the site.

Literary treatment of Delphi can further enhance its portrayal in historical accounts. The Roman poet Lucan, in his *De Bello Civili*, describes a fictional account of a consultation of Apollo by Appius Claudius Pulcher during the Civil Wars of Caesar and Pompey: “Appius approached the Delphic Oracle,

which had been closed to the public for many years, and consulted the god Apollo.”¹²⁴ Although Lucan applies the standard epic practices of divine consultation, he shifts the focus from the protagonist, Pompey, and has Appius, at the last moment, consult Apollo.¹²⁵ Aside from who “consulted” the oracle and Lucan’s literary motive, it is incidentally mentioned that the sanctuary has been closed, but still in operation; the priestesses were still there and the temple was still intact. He goes on to describe the possible reasons for this, explaining that, “The chasm [*hiatus*] of Parnassus, fallen mute and silent, hiding its god. The breath of inspiration fails it outlet here, and has shifted its path to a distant region of the world...”¹²⁶

This statement is vague, since many times throughout any year, the oracular center was closed and Apollo only issued oracles on certain days.¹²⁷ It is more likely that Lucan was referring to a more general shutting down, perhaps owing to political reasons, than the regulated closure of the sanctuary. It is clear, however, that “Appius” received an oracle from Delphi. Lucan wrote the work as an epic poem, circulated around AD 60, describing the events of the Civil War. In this sense, there was no great motive for historical accuracy, yet it can be suggested that the decline of Delphi was an accepted sentiment of his audience. The “great ones” whom he mentions in his account could be certain plunderers of the shrine (the plunder would have been in recent social memory at Lucan’s time), and the best example is Sulla. However, soon after, other “great ones” attempted to stop the god’s mouth.

Nero attempted to abolish the oracle after receiving some unpleasant predictions, as Dio Cassius tells us that he took away the territory of Cirrha and gave it to the soldiers and “he also abolished the oracle, after slaying some people and throwing them into the fissure from which the sacred vapor arose.”¹²⁸ The work, *Nero*, attributed to Lucian also gives this account, but rather suggests that the chasm is not the source of the divine vapor, but rather the orifice from which the “divine voice” came forth.¹²⁹ To take revenge on Apollo and the Pythia, because Nero failed to interpret his oracular response correctly, he stole 500 bronze statues from the shrine and attempted to close it for good, despite the fact that the theatre had been constructed for his visit in AD 67.¹³⁰ However, upon his death, in AD 68, Apollo’s sanctuary was reopened. A few decades later, in AD 84, Domitian helped to rebuild the temple, but the decline of the oracle is still evident, especially in its depiction by authors of the first and second centuries AD, as we shall see in Chapter 2.

The Roman satirist Juvenal also alludes to the decline of Delphi. In his sixth Satire, written around AD 116, he takes the extreme stance that Delphi and Ammon are completely silenced. In this satire, Juvenal’s intent is the denunciation of women and marriage, something which is perhaps a reflection of his own misogynistic attitude.¹³¹ He has the perfect reason to mention the silence of Delphi while discussing divination and astrology, often thought to be superstitions of women.¹³² In this context, Juvenal criticizes charlatans, both the expensive ones consulted by rich women, as well as the more humble practitioners. However, as Delphi was “already silent,” he avoided any criticism

of the consultation of oracles. Perhaps, in this way, the silence of Delphi added to his literary theme. Still, his audience of the early empire would have been aware of the relative silence of the oracle compared with the activity of the past. Satire cannot be considered historical, but the way in which the genre employs ridicule illuminates the inconsistencies of reality in a less-threatening way than confronting the issue directly. In this way, satire can be informative. Additionally, there is at least a generation between the accounts of Lucan and Juvenal which suggests a continued perception of Delphi in a state of relative insignificance, perhaps not to the extent to which it is portrayed in the literary works, but certainly not to the degree which it had in the Classical era. Despite the evidence of its continued, albeit sparse, operation the oracle was declining in prestige and power.

This state of affairs is partially explained by a number of factors. First, in terms of politics, the reduction of political inquiries by wealthy and prominent consultants was partly due to the decreased role Athens and Sparta played within mainland Greece. As they exercised influence at Delphi, the decline of their power as independent *poleis* influenced the number of politically significant questions presented to Apollo. The writers in later periods were no longer preoccupied with Athens and Sparta; likewise, there were few authors left for whom Delphi held such a fascination – Herodotus, along with his audience, was gone. The Mediterranean had largely been colonized, so that function of the oracle was also unnecessary. It was not that the oracle had lost favor, but rather that society had changed, and several original functions of the oracle were no longer needed.

The conquests of Alexander created a change throughout the Mediterranean: increased cultural interaction influenced the whole of Greece, including Delphi. The global nature of this fragmented Hellenized world created the basis of religious and cultural syncretism which assisted in the decline of traditional Greek religion as a whole. New gods and goddesses such as Cybele, Isis, Mythras, Bendis, and Sarapis were adopted within Greece. Apollo and Delphi were no longer at the center of the world, nor the authority on all divine matters. People in the Mediterranean were becoming more involved in personal religious devotion, compared to traditional civic cult, and so Delphi no was no longer the primary means of accessing the divine.

Finally, once Rome gained control and influence in Greece, Delphi was no longer needed to decide important legislative, military, or state matters; the important communal matters which were now addressed to Apollo at Delphi largely regarded plague and famine.¹³³ Plutarch even complains of the tendency of Greek citizens to invite further Roman involvement in Greece, explaining: “Prominent citizens tended to invite the rulers’ decision on every sort of matter and thus forced them to rule more than they wished.”¹³⁴ There was a clear tendency to present these issues to Rome, rather than to Apollo.

Thus, a drop in Delphic consultations regarding important matters of state began in the Hellenistic age and more drastically by the Roman era. By the second century AD, we find other manifestations of a decline at the sanctuary.

Our best evidence for this trend comes from Plutarch. He mentions three major changes seen at Delphi during his time as priest there: the number of Pythiae was reduced from three to one, the oracles were no longer issued in hexameter verse, and the matters brought to the oracle had become more mundane than in previous centuries. For this, we now turn to Plutarch and his Pythian Dialogues in order to gain a better sense of the nature of this change at Delphi.

Notes

- 1 *Philostorgius Hist. Eccl.* 7 in the *Artemii Passio* 35 by John of Rhodes; also cited in Georgius Cedrenus, *Ioannis Scylitzae ope*, Vol. 1, ed. Bekker (1838), p. 532. P&W R476. R. Ramsey and K. Heineman trans. Translations will be listed for the first entry of each work in a chapter. All subsequent translations are by the same, unless otherwise stated.
- 2 Many scholars regard this as an authentic oracle from Delphi; see Dempsey (1918), p. 180; Thompson (1946); P&W, pg. 290; Fatouros (1996). For the oracle as a Christian forgery, see Bowra (1959) and Cobouret (1997). For the origin of the oracle as Antioch, see Vatin (1962) and Van der Spoel, J. (2006), contra, see Gregory (1983) and Markopoulos (1985).
- 3 P&W 601; see also Claudian *Carm.* 8.141–144.
- 4 *Codex Theodosianus* 16.10.10. See also Boyd (1905).
- 5 *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.19 dictates that all altars shall be destroyed, but the temples themselves should be dedicated to public use in AD 408. On the continuation of pagan practices throughout Late Antiquity, see Brown (1971); MacMullen (1981); Lane Fox (1987); and Fontenrose (1988).
- 6 *Cod. Theod.* 15.5.4, Gregory (1983), p. 362. It is significant that the aspect of Delphi which involved the Games continued while the oracle was likely silenced by this time, the same fate of Olympia centuries earlier; this is a reflection of the separation of the oracle and the sanctuary addressed in Chapter 3. By distinguishing the sanctuary from the oracle, we get a better understanding of the state of Delphi during its final centuries of operation.
- 7 For the development, nature, and rise of the *polis* see Ehrenberg (1937); Thomas (1981); and Shipley and Hansen (2006).
- 8 Of course the myth told by Strabo (9.3.6) is relevant here, “it was also believed to be in the center of the inhabited world, and people called it the navel of the earth, in addition fabricating a myth, which is told by Pindar, that the two eagles (some say crows) which had been set free by Zeus met there, one coming from the west and the other from the east,” (ἐνομίσθη δὲ καὶ τῆς οἰκουμένης, καὶ ἐκάλεσαν τῆς γῆς ὀμφαλόν, προσπλάσαντες καὶ μῦθον ὃν φησι Πίνδαρος, ὅτι συμπέσοιεν ἐνταῦθα οἱ ἀετοὶ οἱ ἀφ’ ἐθεντες ὑπὸ τοῦ Διός, ὁ μὲν ἀπὸ τῆς δύσεως ὁ δ’ ἀπὸ τῆς ἀνατολῆς; οἱ δὲ κόρακάς φασι), H.L. Jones trans. Also relevant is the myth of Apollo slaying the Python; Plutarch (*De def. or.* 414A–B) records that “And this [the oracle at Delphi], the most ancient in time and the most famous in repute, men record that for a long time it was made desolate and unapproachable by a fierce creature, a serpent; they do not, however, put the correct interpretation upon its lying idle, but quite the reverse; for it was the desolation that attracted the creature rather than that the creature caused the desolation,” (καὶ γὰρ τοῦτο δὴ τοῦνταῦθα πρεσβύτατον ὃν ‘χρόνῳ τε δόξη τε’ κλεινότατον ὑπὸ θηρίου χαλεποῦ δρακαίνης πολὺν χρόνον ἐρημον γενέσθαι καὶ ἀπροσπέλαστον ἰστοροῦσιν, οὐκ ὀρθῶς τὴν ἀργίαν ἀλλ’ ἀνάπαλιν λαμβάνοντες), F. Cole Babbitt trans. One myth reflects the centrality of the site whereas the other stresses its remoteness. Both are, in a sense, valid.

- 9 For the origins of Panhellenism, see Sourvinou-Inwood (1988), (1990), and (1993) and Morgan (1990), (1993).
- 10 For the three different accounts, see the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo*; Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 1–30; and Euripides, *Iphigenia in Tauris* 1234.
- 11 Morgan (1990), pp. 106–145.
- 12 Morgan (1990), p. 134. This is based on archeological evidence found at the site, which does not support the Delphic myths of divine succession at the sanctuary; this implies that activity dates to the Bronze Age. For an examination of Delphic myths, see Fontenrose (1974).
- 13 For the role of Delphi in colonization see Forrest (1957); Malkin (1987) and (1994); Dougherty (1992); and Shachar (2000).
- 14 For Delphi's role with Sparta, see Cartledge (1980); Ogden (1994), and Plut. *Lyc.* 6; for its role in the reforms of Cleisthenes in 508/7 BC, see Bowden (2005), p. 95–6.
- 15 See Ehrenberg (1937), p. 151; P&W, p. 151; most notably, Morgan (1990); Price (1985) and Parker (1985).
- 16 For the First Sacred War, see Busolt (1893), Davies (1994), and Forrest (1956); for the Second Sacred War, see Thuc. 1.112 and Plut. *Per.* 21; for the Third Sacred War, see Cawkwell (1978), Buckler (1985) and (1989), and Worthington (2008).
- 17 See Hdt. 1.14; 1.46.
- 18 P&W, pp. 17–40.
- 19 For the mantic procedures and the role of the Pythia, see Bouché-Leclercq, (1879); Flacelière (1965); Latte (1940). For lot oracles, see Bouché-Leclercq (1879), who claims that lot oracles were either the primary or secondary form of divination at Delphi. Amandry (1950), chapter 6, especially p. 245, agrees that lot was in use, but not as a primary form of divination. For the *adyton*, see Hollinshead (1999).
- 20 Pi. *Ol.* 9.43.
- 21 Johnson (2008), p. 67.
- 22 Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* 395; “ὅτι κεν εἴπῃ χρεῖων ἐκ δάφνης γυάλων ὑπο Πάρνησοιο.” H.G. Evelyn-White trans.
- 23 On the temple and Delphic myth, see Sourvinou-Inwood (1979); on the archaeological history of the temple, see Homolle (1896); Courby (1927); and Amandry (1989).
- 24 *SIG* 204; see below (pp. 19–20).
- 25 Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* 443, “ἐξ δ' ἄδυτον κατέδυσσε διὰ τριπόδων ἐριτίμων.” H.G. Evelyn-White trans.
- 26 Hollinshead (1999), p. 191.
- 27 Hdt. 7.140.
- 28 See also Eur. *Andr.* 111; Eur. *Ion* 510–515; Aristoph. *Kn.* 1016.
- 29 Courby (1927), p. 66. See also Oppé (1904); Bourguet (1914); Poulsen (1920); and Amandry (1950).
- 30 For a summary of ancient and modern evidence, see Heineman (2010).
- 31 See de Boer *et al.* (2001); Etiope *et al.* (2005); and Piccardi *et al.* (2008).
- 32 Johnston (2008), pp. 65–70.
- 33 Some scholars, such as P&W, believe that it was the priest who coached the Pythia, and was responsible for the hexameter oracles. Other scholars point out that the ancient evidence explicitly says it is the Pythia who is responsible for the oracles. See Amandry (1950) and Maurizio (1997), (2001).
- 34 Maurizio (1995), p. 69, see also Fontenrose (1978); and Price (1985). Although Fontenrose argues that the Pythia gave the responses, argues that many are not authentic oracles.
- 35 Maurizio (1995), p. 83. See also Plut. *Mor.* 292d; 365a; 437a; and 438b.
- 36 For the categorization of the various oracular responses, see Fontenrose (1978).

- 37 I would like to thank Fred Bendeich, of the University of Melbourne, who provided me with these counts concerning Greek prophetic terminology from his thesis, “A comparison of the approaches of Herodotus and Thucydides to religion and superstition,” submitted for the degree of Master of Arts, March 2009.
- 38 Hdt. 7.140.2–3 and Hdt. 1.46 respectively.
- 39 Harrison (2002), pp. 144–145.
- 40 Hdt. 8.77, for example.
- 41 See Hdt. 1.52; 2.135; 3.57; 8.27; 8.121–122; 9.81.
- 42 Hdt. 7.138–144.
- 43 Forrest (1982), p. 319.
- 44 Casson (1914), p. 145, referring to Hdt. 7.132. However, Munro (1902), p. 320 suggests that Xerxes sent a force to Delphi with the intent to protect its treasures from thieves. For the destruction of Phocian sanctuaries, see Paus. 10. 35. The Delphic Amphictyony served as an administrative body at the sanctuary; 24 representatives from a dozen Greek *ethnē* (Delphi was one of these), which sent two sacred ambassadors (*hieromnēmones*), who oversaw the maintenance of the temple and other buildings within the *temenos*, were responsible for fines against religious impiety, and protecting the sanctuary in the Sacred Wars. They met biannually, once at Delphi and once at Thermopylae. On the Amphictyony, see Roux (1979) and Sánchez (2001).
- 45 See P&W, p. 173 and Parke (1967), p. 107, respectively.
- 46 Dillon and Garland (2000), pp. 219–220.
- 47 Hdt. 7.141.3–4. For a detailed discussion on the oracle, including historical problems and authenticity see Crahay (1956), p. 11; Fontenrose (1978), pp. 42–44.
- 48 Plut. *Arist.* 11.3.
- 49 *FGrH* 668f.13.138–140, 153–156; Diodorus (11.14.4) claims that Delphi honored this event with a trophy at the temple of Athena Pronaia. Diodorus uses Ctesias for much of his work, but modern authors often view Ctesias as historically unreliable. See Burn (1984), pp. 308–309.
- 50 Plut. *Num.* 9; the destruction was so great that the sacred fire was extinguished.
- 51 Hdt. 8.122.
- 52 Contra, see Forrest (1982), p. 319 who offers the counter argument that the glorification of Delphi was a belated attempt to save the reputation of the oracle.
- 53 Homolle (1896), p. 705; P&W, p. 189.
- 54 For the revolt against Artaxerxes, see P&W 176. For the sending of a colony, see P&W 177. The Parians were told to found a colony on the island of Pharos in the Adriatic.
- 55 Thuc. 1.112.5; Plut. *Per.* 21; Strabo 9.3.15.
- 56 Thuc. 1.112.5. Hornblower (2007), pp. 49. Diodorus 50 claims that the Spartans attempted to gain control of the Amphictyony in the fifth century.
- 57 Plut. *Per.* 21. For Delphic *promanteia*, see Pouilloux (1952).
- 58 Plut. *Per.* 21.
- 59 Thuc. 1.118.3, “κατὰ κράτος πολεμοῦσι νίκην ἔσεσθαι, καὶ αὐτὸς ἔφη ξυλλήψεσθαι καὶ παρακαλούμενος καὶ ἄκλητος.” E. P. Dutton trans.
- 60 Fontenrose (1978), p. 246.
- 61 Dillon (1997), p. 94. See also Callisthenes *FGH* 124 F22.
- 62 Paus. 8.11.12, Ἀθηναῖος δὲ μάντευμα ἐκ Δωδώνης Σικελίαν ἦλθεν οἰκίζειν, ἡ δὲ οὐ πόρρω τῆς πόλεως ἡ Σικελία λόφος ἐστὶν οὐ μέγας· οἱ δὲ οὐ συμφρονήσαντες τὸ εἰρημένον ἔς τε ὑπερορίους στρατείας προήχθησαν καὶ ἐς τὸν Συρακοσίων πόλεμον. W.H.S. Jones trans.
- 63 Paus. 10.11.6. “The Athenians also built a portico out of the spoils they took in their war against the Peloponnesians and their Greek allies. There are also dedicated the figure-heads of ships and bronze shields,” (ῥκοδόμησαν δὲ καὶ Ἀθηναῖοι στοὰν ἀπὸ χρημάτων ἃ ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ σφίσιν ἐγένετο ἀπὸ τε Πελοποννησίων καὶ

ὄσαι Πελοποννησίους ἦσαν τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ σύμμαχοι. ἀνάκειται δὲ καὶ πλοίων τὰ ἄκρα κοσμήματα καὶ ἀσπίδες χαλκαῖ). This point is important for the analysis of the separation between the oracle and the sanctuary, addressed in Chapter 3.

- 64 P&W, p. 189.
- 65 Arnush (2006), p. 107; Bowden (2005), p. 110.
- 66 Notably, the oracle referring to the exiles from Delos (Thuc. 5.1); an oracle regarding a priestess of Athena whose name was Peace (Plut. *Nic.* 13.4).
- 67 For the Pythian Games, see Snell and Maehler (1987).
- 68 Arnush (2006), p. 103. For Spartan consultation regarding Argos, see Xen. *Hell.* 4.7.2
- 69 Cic. *Div.* 1.34.
- 70 For Thebes' consultation, see Paus. 4.32.5, Thebes also consulted several other oracles including Ismenian and Ptōion Apollo and Abae.
- 71 Parker (1985), p. 303, 309. See Xen. *Hell.* 3.2.22.
- 72 Arnush (2006), p. 103. Diod. Sic. 23.48.3, generally thought to be an earthquake in 373 BC, see Plut. *De def. or.* 434c, but Courby (1927), p. 110 rejects earthquake, and P&W (p. 214) agrees, claiming it was a deluge, but probably caused by an earthquake. For the disruption of consultation, see Scott (2010), p. 124.
- 73 Volgraff (1927), pp. 467–68.
- 74 Bourguet (1932), p. 124; see also pp. 119–127.
- 75 P&W 262, Fontenrose H21.
- 76 SIG 204. Fontenrose (1978), p. 251. See also Bowden (2005), p. 92 who notes that this procedure is unparalleled.
- 77 Parker (1985), p. 302.
- 78 Buckler (1989), p. 399.
- 79 P&W, p. 214.
- 80 Buckler (1989), p. 11.
- 81 Diod. Sic. 16.25.1.
- 82 For the history and significance of the Third Sacred War, see Hammond (1937); Cawkwell (1978); Buckler (1989); McQueen (1995); and Green (2007).
- 83 Buckler (1989), p. 143.
- 84 Just. *Epit.* 8.2.3, “*Igitur Philippus, quasi sacrilegii, non Thebanorum ultor esset, omnes milites coronas laureas sumere iubet, atque ita veluti deo duce in proelium pergit.*” J.C. Yardley trans.
- 85 P&W R268, “*Ἀργυρέαις λόγῃσι μάχου, καὶ πάντα νικήσεις.*” J. Fontenrose trans. Fontenrose (1978), p. 338 says, “This is a proverbial saying as the sources indicate. The oracle story refers to Philip’s policy of purchasing treason or surrender when he could do so in preference to carrying on a siege.”
- 86 Dem. *De Cor.* 19.327, Aeschin. 3.130 and Cic. *Div.* 2.57. See also Parker (1985), p. 316, 325; Arnush (2006) p. 107, and P&W, p. 237.
- 87 Plut. *Alex.* 14.4, “*αὐτὸς ἀναβάς βία πρὸς τὸν ναὸν εἷλκεν αὐτήν, ἡ δὲ ὥσπερ ἐζητημένη τῆς σπουδῆς εἶπεν ‘ἀνίκητος εἶ, ὦ παῖ,’ τοῦτο ἀκούσας Ἀλέξανδρος οὐκέτι ἔφη χρῆζειν ἐτέρου μαντεύματος, ἀλλ’ ἔχειν ὃν ἐβούλετο παρ’ αὐτῆς χρησμόν.*” B. Perrin trans. Contrast this with Plutarch’s account of his visit to Siwah (27.9). Plutarch refers to the claims of some that the tale of such a divine proclamation came about because of a slip in Greek pronunciation on the part of the foreign priest. The oracle wished to greet Alexander in a friendly manner, by addressing him in Greek as “O my son” (ὦ παιδίον). His foreign pronunciation (τῶν φθόγγων ὑπὸ βαρβαρισμοῦ), however, led him to end the word with a sigma instead of a nu, resulting in ὦ παιδῖος. Alexander was pleased by this slip of the tongue (σφάλμα τῆς φωνῆς) and the tale was told that he had been greeted by the god as “son of Zeus” (παῖδα Διὸς αὐτὸν τοῦ θεοῦ προσεπώντος).
- 88 Plut. *Alex.* 27.3–4. For Alexander’s deification and sanction by oracles see Classen (1959); Bosworth (1977); and Ogden (2011). For Alexander’s scrupulous devotion

- to religion, see Edmunds (1971). For a recent survey of the divinity of Alexander, see Anson (2003) and Bloedow (2004).
- 89 There is one other mention of Alexander consulting Delphi (P&W 271), but our earliest source, Curtius Rufus (5.4), mentions it only as an anonymous oracle. Plutarch's version (*Alex.* 37.1) says that a wolf will be Alexander's guide on the expedition against the Persians. The wolf (λύκος) was a Lycian (Λυκίου) guide, and it is worth noting that the Lycian, himself, is an interpreter. See Fontenrose (1978), p. 339. Plutarch seems to place a high value on the interpretation of oracles and that many oracles are also puns.
- 90 Arnush (2006), p. 110. See also P&W, p. 239 and *SIG.* 296.
- 91 Homolle (1896), p. 705.
- 92 Thomas (1981), p. 40; Green (1990), p. 53, 56; and Cawkwell (1996), pp. 98–121.
- 93 Hansen and Nielsen (2004), p. 20.
- 94 Fontenrose (1978), p. 5.
- 95 Arnush (2006), p. 302; see also *CID* ii. 102.
- 96 Hammond (1989) and Badian (1994).
- 97 Bosworth (1986).
- 98 Tarn (1938), pp. 46–51.
- 99 Plut. *Demetr.* 13.1, “ὁ δὲ μάλιστα τῶν τιμῶν ὑπερφυῆς ἦν καὶ ἀλλόκοτον, ἔγραψε Δρομοκλείδης ὁ Σφήττιος ὑπὲρ τῆς τῶν ἀσπιδῶν ἀναθέσεως εἰς Δελφοὺς παρὰ Δημητρίου λαβεῖν χρησμόν.” B. Perrin trans.
- 100 P&W, p. 254; see also Parke (1967). For the installation and increase of Aetolian power at Delphi in the third century, see Flacelière (1937).
- 101 Champion (1996), p. 317; see *Syll.*³ 378. Men are mentioned in this inscription, but remain unnamed, while Apollo takes a leading role. Pausanias' account also stresses the same Delphic tradition, in which Apollo defends his own sanctuary (Paus. 10.19.4–23.14). Polybius (2.35.7), on the other hand, accepts the Aetolian tradition despite many of his anti-Aetolian sentiments, claiming the Gallic invasion is on par with the Persian invasion of the fifth century.
- 102 Roussel (1924), pp. 101–109.
- 103 Champion (1995), pp. 213–220 discusses these decrees in detail, compiles the evidence for the earlier Delphic tradition and discusses the implications of Aetolian propaganda. See *Syll.*³ 408, *Syll.*³ 402; *FD* III.1 482; *FD* III.1 481; and *FD* III.1 483.
- 104 Paus. 1.4.4, “καὶ σφισιν αὐτοὶ τε Δελφοὶ καὶ Φωκέων ἀντετάχθησαν οἱ τὰς πόλεις περὶ τὸν Παρνασσὸν οἰκοῦντες.”
- 105 Plut. *Demetr.* 40.7–8.
- 106 Dillon (1997), p. 51.
- 107 Livy 23.11; Plut. *Fab.* 18; and Appian, *Hann.* 27.
- 108 Plut. *Fab.* 18. Namely, two Vestal Virgins were convicted of sexual incontinence, one was buried alive and the other committed suicide.
- 109 Livy 23.11.2–6, “*si ita faxitis, Romani, vestrae res meliores facilioresque erunt, magisque ex sententia res publica vestra vobis procedet, victoriaque duelli populi Romani erit. Pythio Apollini re publica vestra bene gesta servataque lucris meritis donum mittitote deque praeda manubiis spoliisque honorem habetote; lasciviam a vobis prohibetote.*” C. Roberts trans.
- 110 Rome had dedicated at Delphi as early as 403 BC. While at war with the Etruscan city of Veii, Camillus was elected a military tribune with consular power two years later (Livy 5.10). Meanwhile, several omens were reported; the most significant of these was that the Alban Lake had risen to unprecedented heights without massive rainfall (see Livy 5.15 and Plut. *Cam.* 3).
- 111 Stadter (2005), p. 206.
- 112 Dumézil (1996), p. 479.
- 113 Livy 25.12.9, “If you wish, Romans, to drive out enemies, the sore which has come from afar, I propose that a festival be vowed to Apollo, to be observed with

- good cheer in honor of Apollo every year,” (*hostes, Romani, si ex agro expellere vultis, vomicam quae gentium venit longe, Apollini vovendos censeo ludos, qui quotannis comiter Apollini fiant*). However, it seems that the games were not held every year, (Livy 27.11.6).
- 114 P&W p. 351.
- 115 Corinth became a significant link between Rome and Greece; it was here that later both Titus Flamininus, in 196 BC, and Nero, in AD 66, made the Greeks “free and self-governing,” (ἐλευθέρους καὶ αὐτονόμους). Plut. *Flam* 12.8, and Polybius 18.46. See also Derow (2003).
- 116 Daux (1936), p. 372.
- 117 Plut. *Sull.* 12.5–8.
- 118 Plut. *Sull.* 19.6, “καὶ τῆς χώρας αὐτῶν ἀποτερόμενος τὴν ἡμίσειαν τῷ Πυθίῳ καὶ τῷ Ὀλυμπίῳ καθιέρωσεν, ἐκ τῶν προσόδων κελεύσας ἀποδίδοσθαι τὰ χρήματα τοῖς θεοῖς ἅπερ αὐτὸς εἰλήφει.” B. Perrin trans. But the Romans later let the Thebans have it back; see Paus. 1.20.7.
- 119 Diod. Sic. 16.25.1.
- 120 Homolle (1896), pp. 704–705. P&W date the destruction to 85–84 BC, p. 278. Plutarch (Plut. *Ant.* 23.3) records that later Antonius “also had measurements taken of the temple of Pythian Apollo, with the purpose of completing it; indeed, he promised as much to the senate,” (καὶ τὸν τοῦ Πυθίου νεῶν κατεμέτρησεν ὥς συντελέσων: τοῦτο γὰρ ὑπέσχετο πρὸς τὴν σύγκλητον), B. Perrin trans.
- 121 Strabo 9.3.4, “ὠλιγόρηται δ’ ἰκανῶς καὶ τὸ ἱερόν, πρότερον δ’ ὑπερβαλλόντως ἐτιμήθη.” His account must be approached with caution. As Maria Pretzler has pointed out, “Strabo seems mainly occupied with describing how Homer’s description of Greece relates to the present state of the landscape...In fact, much of books eight and especially nine seems scarcely more than an attempt to describe the Homeric landscape and to bring it up to date.” Pretzler (2005), p. 150. Still, there seems to be a general decline in Greece during the Augustan era and beyond. See Spawforth (2012) and Alcock (1993), pp. 24–32 who argues that it may not have been as bad as several sources portray; but Greece was certainly not in as good a state as it had been in the Classical period.
- 122 Cic. *Div.* 1.19.37–38, “Numquam illud oraculum Delphis tam celebre et tam clarum fuisset neque tantis donis refertum omnium populorum atque regum, nisi omnis aetas oraculorum illorum veritatem esse experta. “Idem iam diu non facit.” Ut igitur nunc minore gloria est, quia minus oraculorum veritas excellit, sic tum nisi summa veritate in tanta gloria non fuisset.” W.A. Falconer trans.
- 123 Cic. *Div.* 2.57.117, “sed quod caput est, cur isto modo iam oracla Delphis non eduntur non modo nostra aetate, sed iam diu, ut modo nihil possit esse contemptius?”
- 124 Luc. *BC* 5.68–70, “Appius eventus, finemque expromere rerum sollicitat superos, multosque obducta per annos Delphica fatidici reserat penetralia Phoebi.” J.D. Duff trans.
- 125 Ahl (1976), p. 122 notes that “Lucan seems to be flouting tradition to throw his reader off balance.” For a detailed analysis of the role of Delphi in this story, see Dick (1965).
- 126 Luc. *BC* 5.131–134, “muto Parnasos hiatu conticuit pressitque deum, seu spiritus istas destituit fauces mundique in deivia versum duxit iter...”
- 127 See Chapter 3 (p. 72) for details regarding the auspicious days for oracular consultation at Delphi.
- 128 Dio Cass. 62.14.2, “καὶ τὸ μαντεῖον κατέλυσεν, ἀνθρώπους ἐς τὸ στόμιον ἐξ οὗ τὸ ἱερόν πνεῦμα ἀνῆκει σφάξας.” E. Cary trans.
- 129 Pseudo-Lucian *Nero* 10.
- 130 Kolonia (2009), p. 68.
- 131 Courtney (1980), p. 253.
- 132 Juvenal *Sat.* 6.553–556.

- 133 For example, Cleitosthenes of Tralles consulted Delphi in AD 250 regarding some affliction of the land, P&W 471.
- 134 Plut. *Præcepta gerendae rei publicae* 814f–815a, “ἀναγκάζουσιν ἑαυτῶν μᾶλλον ἢ βούλονται δεσπότης εἶναι τοῦς ἡγουμένους.” Cited and translated by T.L. Robinson (1991), p. 71.

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2 Plutarch and the duality of Delphi

ἰοὺ ἰοῦ, δύσκριτον πρᾶγμα καὶ ζητήσεως δεόμενον πολλῆς ἤκετε κομίζοντες ἡμῖν.

Ah! You have come, bringing to us a tough problem to discern and one requiring much investigation.¹

The matter to which Didymus the Cynic is referring is, of course, the state of the oracle at Delphi. At the beginning of the first millennium AD, the ancient sources begin to attest the deterioration of the oracle with increasing frequency, as we saw in Chapter 1: first Cicero, then Strabo and, most notably, Plutarch.² As the last author addresses the decay of Delphi specifically, Plutarch will be the focus of this inquiry, to better determine the status of Delphi during Plutarch's priestly tenure.³ As seen in the above quote from Plutarch's essay, even in the second century AD this was an important and difficult question to tackle. This chapter examines, in detail, several of his essays which concern Delphi directly in order to get an understanding of both the sanctuary and the oracle during the late first and early second centuries AD, a time when Plutarch himself witnessed a change at Delphi.

Plutarch as a source

Plutarch is a key literary source regarding Delphi. Much of his work concerns Delphi directly, such as his Pythian Dialogues, and elsewhere the sanctuary and its oracles feature largely in his writing. His parallel *Lives* contain numerous tales of Delphi, and his *Moralia* is interspersed with references to the sanctuary.⁴

Plutarch had many vocations. Each one must be considered when assessing his works, as certain biases and methods guide the compositions; these differ between the *Lives* and his *Moralia*.⁵ As a philosopher, he often uses the familiar dialogue form to present several different ideas. Through various *personae*, Plutarch demonstrates different philosophical and religious positions that must have been current in his day. This method is not new; rather Plutarch is mirroring a long-established philosophical method used by both Plato and Cicero long before him. With this style of presentation, it is difficult to distinguish Plutarch's own ideas from those of society at large; he rarely reveals his own position clearly.

This approach allows him to present more controversial aspects of the dialogues, while remaining detached from them. The *persona* serves as a device which facilitates the arguments in order to reflect possible contemporary positions concerning the topic under discussion. To add to the confusion, his dialogues often swing between the philosophical and religious topics, making it difficult to determine to what conclusions, if any, Plutarch himself conformed.

His vocation as a prolific writer helps to reveal a clearer picture through intratextuality, as there is extensive literary output from which to compare and contrast ideas and themes. As Brenk has noted, “the final word in a dialogue usually represents the most satisfactory solution to a difficulty,” though several trusted speakers appear frequently in his work.⁶ The most dependable opinions in his “Pythian Dialogues” seem to come from three different “speakers” who, at various times, reflect Plutarch’s own sentiments: Plutarch’s brother Lamprias, his friend Theon, and his former teacher Ammonius.⁷

Crucial for our examination is Plutarch’s priesthood at Delphi which lasted from AD 93 until his death sometime after AD 120.⁸ This position makes him a most credible witness to Delphic operations. At the sanctuary, he presided over the Pythian Games as *agonothete*, and assumed the role of president of the Amphictyonic Council (*proedros*).⁹ However, these were civic offices, and not directly connected to the oracle.¹⁰ It seems instead that his knowledge regarding oracular consultation at Delphi comes from others, rather than his own first-hand information. Plutarch tells us: “Of the proof on which I depend I have as witnesses many foreigners and all the officials and servants at the shrine.”¹¹ It is clear that Plutarch had intimate knowledge of the operations of the sanctuary, first hand, despite the speculative knowledge of oracular operations. For example, he had access to archives possibly inaccessible to others, as well as a familiarity of the procedure of the Amphictyony and Pythian Games which other extant authors lack.¹² Despite the doubt cast on his own personal experience of the oracle, he remains an invaluable source and his dialogues present a unique picture of Delphi in the second century AD.

The Delphic Dialogues: a contradictory picture

Plutarch’s three essays, called the “Pythian” or “Delphic Dialogues,” were written both at and about Delphi. The traditional order is *De Pythiae Oraculis* (*De Pythiae*), *De E apud Delphos* (*De E*), *De Defectu Oraculorum* (*De Defectu*); it seems, however, that the chronological order is rather *De Defectu*, *De E*, and finally *De Pythiae*.¹³ This is particularly important as there is an apparent contradiction within these texts regarding the state of Delphi in the second century AD.

Plutarch portrays a seemingly inconsistent view of the sanctuary during his time there. On the one hand, in *De Pythiae*, Delphi is a bustling center filled with new buildings, visitors, and a sense of a revival. A revival during Plutarch’s day has been widely accepted; however the nature of this revival remains unclear: the modern sources do not, as a whole, indicate whether the revival is in terms of the sanctuary, the oracle, the Pythian Games, or otherwise.¹⁴ Yet,

the most concrete evidence of a decline, or, at the very least, a change in oracular practice at Delphi is also apparent in *De Pythiae* and *De Defectu*.¹⁵ Additional evidence shows us that he is contemporary with the final revival of Delphi before it slipped into irrevocable decline, by the Severan period, in the late second and early third centuries AD.¹⁶ These conflicting views create considerable confusion in trying to interpret and determine the status of Delphi during Plutarch's time there.

The examination of these essays provides a basis for understanding Plutarch's view of Delphi during his priesthood, and highlights the contradictory picture which he presents to us. This, in turn, shows that the sanctuary operated on two levels: the day-to-day operations, including the Pythian Games, and the oracle. Each of these two levels declined at different times and at different rates. Even as the oracle was consulted less frequently, the sanctuary was still adorned and visited. This nuanced history of Delphi facilitates a better understanding of the final centuries of Delphic operation. After assessing the evidence for a supposed decline of Delphic oracular consultation, I examine both the timing and nature of its revival, to demonstrate that the sanctuary was still well-regarded and frequently visited during the late first and early second centuries AD.

Both *De Defectu* and *De Pythiae* must be understood in terms of the theological and philosophical nature of their content. Philosophical dialogues are aimed at provocative discussions, allowing the reader to come to conclusions on their own, rather than to explain issues. This creates several problems when interpreting the text, as Plutarch himself is "absent" from the discussion, making it difficult to pin down his thoughts on the matter. Throughout the discussion, the *personae* offer different reasons to explain why oracles were becoming obsolete, but, in keeping with the philosophical tradition, the topic ultimately remains unresolved.

The essays should also be placed within the context of second century AD Achaia during the so-called "Second Sophistic." In a general sense, the "Second Sophistic" refers to "Greek writings [and the intellectual society that produced them] from the first to the third centuries CE."¹⁷ This phrase is not without complications, particularly considering that these authors probably did not view their collective works as a cohesive body of literature.¹⁸ Still, some themes pervade many of these works including history, the loss of power, the nature of authority and its validity, and shifts in cultural identity. Many writers, including Plutarch, are writing from a Greek perspective within a Roman context, the term "Second Sophistic" will be used to describe the historical and literary context from which Plutarch's works emerged.

As a response to Roman-occupied Greece, intellectuals tended to focus on the glories of the Classical past to highlight the importance of Greek culture. Oftentimes this exaggeration of past greatness marginalized the contemporary intellectual scene. As such, the notion of "decline" was a common subject during the "Second Sophistic" in terms of cultural inspiration, population decline, and comparison of Greek contemporary culture with that of the

Classical past. A common trope during this movement concerned the question of literary decline. For example, Tacitus in his *Dialogue on the Orators* says:

You often ask me, Justus Fabius, how it is that while the genius and the fame of so many distinguished orators have shed a luster on the past, our age is so forlorn and so destitute of the glory of eloquence that it scarce retains the very name of orator.¹⁹

This sentiment is also reflected by Ps. Longinus *On the Sublime* when he says: “So great and world-wide a dearth of high utterance attends our age.”²⁰ This is reminiscent of Plutarch’s essay, *De Pythiae* concerning the change in oracular responses from verse to prose, as we shall see. It is clear that the trope of “decline” was a common theme in the “Second Sophistic,” and it is within this context that Plutarch’s essays should be viewed.²¹ However, this does not allow us to overlook the details within the text or regard them as literary hyperbole, but rather the information presented within Plutarch (and indeed all the authors of the “Second Sophistic”) must reflect some actual reality. In the case of Delphi, fewer oracular responses survive from this time which suggests that fewer oracular responses were given. We now turn to Plutarch’s Pythian Dialogues to determine the state of Delphi in the second century AD, keeping in mind the philosophical, pedagogical, and literary contexts from which they arise.

De Defectu Oraculorum

The *De Defectu Oraculorum* is a debate between Lamprias, Demetrius, Cleombrotus, Ammonius, Philip, Didymus, and Heracleon, aimed at understanding why, by their time, oracles had begun to wane in terms of the number of responses given and in their prestige throughout the Mediterranean.²² The title of the work more closely suggests the idea of abandonment (εκλελοιπότην), rather than decline.²³ In other words, the abandonment of the oracle led to a decrease in the number of consultants, something which, in turn, diminished the reputation of the ultimate arbiter in Greek society.

The speakers begin the inquiry by stating that the oracle of Ammon had a great reputation in the past but “at the present time it seems to be somewhat evanescent.”²⁴ Then Demetrius brings the discussion to a much more proximate problem:

There is no need to make any inquiries nor to raise any questions about the state of affairs there, when we see the evanescence (ἀμαύρωσιν) of the oracles here, or rather the total disappearance (δυσχεῖν) of all but one or two; but we should deliberate the reason why they have become so utterly weak (οὕτως ἐξησθένηκε).²⁵

The topic is worthy of discussion: either the oracles were indeed in decline, or at the very least, there was a change in practice at Delphi. Demetrius describes

the fate of several other oracles, as he notes: “silence has come upon some and utter desolation upon others.”²⁶ The oracle of Amphiaräus and the oracle at Tegyrae, both which experienced high repute during the Persian Wars, were silent in Plutarch’s day; additionally, the oracle of Ammon at Siwah is mentioned as declining.²⁷ The characters agree that the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi is a fitting location to discuss this change.

Proposed reasons for the decline

The first suggestion given to explain why oracles are becoming increasingly abandoned is offered by Didymus the Cynic:

It is indeed a wonder, when so much wickedness has been disseminated upon earth that not only Modesty (Αἰδώς) and Righteous Indignation (Νέμεσις), as Hesiod said long ago, have deserted the life of mankind, but that divine Providence (πρόνοια θεῶν) also has gathered up its oracles and departed from every place.²⁸

Didymus’ reason for this is that the world is becoming more depraved and the gods see man as unworthy of their counsel and guidance. The suggestion that the gods simply abandoned their oracles is met with immediate disapproval and Heracleon of Megara counters that “it is not likely that he should deny his utterance to people of the present day because of their unworthiness, when he is responsible for their birth and nurture and their existence and power to think.”²⁹ Here Heracleon, perhaps one of Plutarch’s students, offers some very provocative ideas. Apollo is rarely considered responsible for the creation of mankind and the power of man to think in Greek tradition. Through Heracleon, Plutarch presents several Platonic ideas, particularly the notion of the demiurge found in Plato’s *Timaeus*.³⁰ These sorts of considerations of the universe and the divine were becoming popular amongst philosophers and perhaps contributed to their understanding of Delphi by this time.

Didymus’ view, that the gods are abandoning their oracles because mankind is degenerate, is instantly countered and the suggestion is not dealt with at length. It can therefore be assumed that Plutarch did not hold this idea in high regard; yet having presented it, perhaps the idea was circulated during this time. It is strange that Providence (πρόνοια), here meaning the guidance, pre-knowledge or activity of the gods, would be hostile toward prophecy alone and not other human endeavors. Neither Zeus nor Apollo is specifically mentioned, rather the plural θεοί is used. The Cynic also mentions that “oracles departed from every place,” indicating a universal decline of oracles.³¹ Ptōion is mentioned and described as a once-flourishing oracular site of Apollo which is now desolate, and a place where a visitor would scarcely run into a solitary shepherd.³² Cleombrotus clarifies that it is not exactly an overall decline, “rather the total disappearance of all but one or two.”³³ Indeed, as we shall see in Chapters 4 and 5, although some oracles did see a similar trend as Delphi, not all oracles

were dwindling at the same time. Some oracles of the ancient Greek world, specifically in Asia Minor, were thriving while fewer patrons were visiting Apollo at Delphi.

Ammonius, Plutarch's teacher, offers another explanation for the decline:

The fact is that the man who holds that the obsolescence of such of the oracles as have ceased to function has been brought about by some other cause and not by the will of a god gives reason for suspecting that he believes that their creation and continued existence was not due to the god, but was brought about in some other way. For prophecy is something created by a god, and certainly no greater or more potent force exists to abolish and obliterate it.³⁴

Ammonius, then, asserts that it is Apollo himself who is responsible for the decline at Delphi. The interlocutors are not satisfied with this reasoning, so he clarifies his stance through his assertion: "for the god's abandoning of many oracles is nothing other than his way of substantiating the desolation of Greece."³⁵

The decline of Delphi was not at the command of Apollo, but it was natural that the oracle would issue fewer prophecies as the population of Greece decreases.³⁶ To Ammonius, this is a sensible approach taken by Apollo so as not to waste his prophecies. This suggestion should also be viewed within the common trope of "decline" in the "Second Sophistic." However, by comparing Delphi to the height of its classical past, there is a noticeable wane for Plutarch and his interlocutors. It is significant that the first two suggestions receive the least amount of attention, perhaps reflecting Plutarch's own thoughts on the matter.

The third suggestion is the longest and most intriguing of the explanations – *daemones* (δαίμων) are in charge of the oracle. Cleombrotus introduces the topic of *daemones* and postulates their control over Delphi, and consequently the abandonment of oracles when they leave the sanctuary. He says:

Following the lead of many others before us, that coincidentally with the total desertion of the guardian spirits (δαίμονες) assigned to the oracles and prophetic shrines, occurs the defection of the oracles themselves; and when the spirits flee or go to another place, the oracles themselves lose their power, but when the spirits return many years later, the oracles, like musical instruments, become articulate, since those who can put them to use are present and in charge of them.³⁷

Perhaps it is significant that this idea was put forth by Cleombrotus. He and his friend, Demetrius, were devout and well-traveled men (they are from Tarsus and Sparta respectively); the pair met at Delphi, the former travelling from the Persian Gulf, and Demetrius from Britain to get there. This strongly reminds us of the two eagles which Zeus released to fly around the world in opposite

directions, finally meeting at the center of the earth, Delphi.³⁸ Cleombrotus' suggestion is in stark contrast to the traditional Delphic theology which places Apollo firmly at the head of the oracle. It is thought that Cleombrotus may be a fictional character invented by Plutarch as, unlike most of his other characters, he appears in no other dialogue and there is no reference to him elsewhere. Perhaps it is the combination of his foreign and fictional natures which allows Cleombrotus to propose a view that was widely different from the traditional understanding of the oracle's operation.³⁹

Indeed, Cleombrotus' suggestion also meets with instant condemnation. The point of contention most troublesome for Heracleon is "that it is not the gods...who are in charge of the oracles, since the gods ought properly to be freed of earthly concerns; but that it is the demigods (δαίμονας), ministers to the gods (ὑπηρέτας θεῶν), who have them in charge..."⁴⁰ It is, for Heracleon, the breaking from the traditional view of the oracle, where Apollo is in charge, which is difficult to accept.⁴¹ Taking the divine prophetic power away from Apollo and placing it in the care of the *daemones* seems to be a composite of various philosophical ideas, including those of Plato, Xenocrates, and Chrysippus.

Although the beginnings of the idea of *daemones* had its origins in Homer and Hesiod, the notion perseveres through religion and philosophy.⁴² The issue of *daemones* is popular in Greek philosophy and it is well known that Socrates himself purported to have his own personal "genius."⁴³ In fact, as Schibili has noted, it was a "relatively common Greek view that each person has their own *daemon*," likely due to the Greek idea that external forces decided the fate, good or bad, of men.⁴⁴ This conception is still far different from a *daemon* in charge of an oracle, as these notions concern the individual, rather than Panhellenic oracular shrines. Still, Plutarch's conception of *daemones* would have been directly influenced by Plato.

Plato, in the *Symposium*, does not deal with the term in the context of a complete doctrine. He mentions it to introduce the story of Eros, and seems satisfied with the defining role of "interpreting and transporting human things to the gods and divine things to men."⁴⁵ Plato's pupil, Philippus of Opus, elaborates this notion, dividing the cosmos into five spheres – fire, aether, air, water, earth – and it is the second and third of these domains which are the home of the *daemones*.⁴⁶ Similarly, Xenocrates of Chalcedon emphasized the middle position of these beings; gods lived in the heavens with the stars and planets, men lived on earth, and *daemones* lived in the sublunary realm in between.⁴⁷ Plutarch also alludes to this through his triangle analogy: equilateral triangles represent the gods, scalene represent *daemones*, and isosceles, men.⁴⁸ It is clear that there is a variety of definitions for this word, but the most important is the definition on which Plutarch, or rather Heracleon, was relying. The inconsistencies arrived at by Plutarch, regarding the definition of *daemones*, are found throughout his *Moralia*. In *On Isis and Osiris*, Plutarch analyzes the notions of Plato, Empedocles, and Xenocrates and ultimately asserts "the assumption, then, is that the demigods (or *daemones*) have a complex and inconsistent nature."⁴⁹ He seems convinced of the intermediary position of the *daemones*, existing

between gods and men, and that they are invisible and incorporeal, a fitting conception for a minister of oracles.⁵⁰ Additionally, there is evidence from Plato concerning *daemones* and their association with divination; indeed they are responsible for the entire prophetic art.

In Plato's *Symposium*, Socrates relays the teachings of Diotima, who tells him what powers the *daemones* possessed:

Interpreting and transporting human things to the gods and divine things to men; entreaties and sacrifices from below, and ordinances and requitals from above: being midway between, it makes each to supplement the other, so that the whole is combined in one. Through it are conveyed all divination (ἡ μαντικὴ) and priestcraft (ιερέων τέχνη) concerning sacrifice and ritual and incantations, and all soothsaying and sorcery. God with man does not mingle: but the spiritual is the means of all society and converse of men with gods and of gods with men, whether waking or asleep. Whosoever has skill in these affairs is a spiritual man to have it in other matters, as in common arts and crafts, is for the mechanical. Many and multifarious are these spirits, and one of them is Love.⁵¹

Plutarch and others could have connected *daemones* with the oracles because of this association given by Plato. It was this understanding of them that allowed for the association with prophecy and oracles; they were capable of communicating with both gods and men, and so were a valuable source of knowledge. Lamprias continues to suggest an inherent ability on the part of *daemones* to perceive and relay future events, and extends this ability to souls.⁵² In this sense, it follows that the *daemones* would certainly have a role to play at Delphi, however, the traditional view of Delphi was that Apollo's words came straight from him to the Pythia and, finally, to the consultant.

From the divinatory role Plato assigns the *daemones*, Plutarch arrives at further interpretations of their role throughout *De Defectu*. He assumes the existence of bad *daemones*. As Plutarch notes, the nature (φύσις) of the *daemones* has human emotions (πάθος) and divine power (δύναμις).⁵³ The *daemones* are judged to be good or evil "according to how well or badly they have exercised their daemonic functions [presiding over oracles, participation in mystic rites, etc.]."⁵⁴ It seems that Cleombrotus' assertion that it is *daemones* who are in charge of oracles, rather than gods, comes from their intermediary position assumed by Plutarch.

However, this suggestion is particularly strange, considering that the idea implies that it is not the Pythia who is responsible for the utterances of Apollo, but somehow the prophecies come from the god, through the proxy of a *daemon*, then through the mouthpiece of the Pythia and, finally, to the inquirer. The addition of a supplementary mediator was a new idea regarding the process of prophecy at Delphi and this seems to be quite radical, as it is not the traditional opinion of the procedure of the oracle in the past.⁵⁵ The notion of *daemones* was relatively common and quite old, and it could have been considered general knowledge by Plutarch's time. There had been associations between *daemones*

and oracles, and Plutarch's development of this idea reflects his attempt to reinterpret traditional myths within a contemporary understanding; he utilized previous notions, and incorporated them in order to help explain why the oracle was declining.⁵⁶ If Apollo was not solely responsible for his own oracle, oracles would be demoted from divine status to that of a *daemon*, or lesser god, and finally to a mere mortal soul. Plutarch does allow for this possibility. As Lamprias says: "the soul does not acquire the prophetic power when it goes forth from the body...it possesses that power even now..." although the power only rarely reveals itself.⁵⁷

If Plato's insistence on the immortality of the Soul is maintained, and his influence on Plutarch is considered, a contradictory view of *daemones* is presented.⁵⁸ On the one hand is the *daemon* equated with the soul, yet on the other hand, is the proposition made by Philip, which suggests that the *daemones* die and oracular shrines die with them.⁵⁹ To highlight the point, he gives the example of the death of Pan which receives no objections.⁶⁰ If the *daemon* responsible for Delphi were to die, the sanctuary would have no access to the gods. However, this idea contradicts the Platonic view of the immortal soul. Additionally, Cleombrotus claims that *daemones* are superior beings, closer to gods than to men. Yet, they are also equated with human souls. Here lies another contradiction. These examples could suggest that Plutarch did not adhere very firmly to the idea that *daemones* interfere with the affairs of men, but, rather, indicates "a certain confusion or even skepticism as to the nature or existence of these *daemones*."⁶¹ It can thus be assumed that the explanation of *daemones* is not closely representative of Plutarch's own beliefs. This is confirmed by the fact that *daemones* are nowhere mentioned in his last work, *De Pythiae Oraculis*, which indicates that he had never shared Cleombrotus' view, as the later essay represented Plutarch's more solidified doctrine.⁶² Yet, the inclusion of this belief could represent a view that was prevalent during Plutarch's day, perhaps even expressed to him by visitors at the sanctuary.

The view could certainly have stemmed from the new religious trend, of personifying new deities, such as Chance and Fate, and elevating them to divine and stately status, which was popular after the Hellenistic age. The traditional civic religion had been developed and transformed by the influence of eastern religion and rational philosophy and, by the Roman period, was far removed from the public cults of past centuries. During the Hellenistic era, Greeks were increasingly living further from the mainland and as a result the civic gods, to whom they were once so intrinsically tied, started to become more remote and less powerful. New gods took precedence, particularly those who represented a universal aspect, and the idea of the Pantheos became popular.⁶³ Other syncretistic views of the gods were gaining popularity as the Mediterranean was becoming infused with a variety of religious thoughts and philosophies. Once the Hellenistic kingdoms collapsed, Platonic philosophy began to infiltrate Greek religion.⁶⁴ The idea of a demiurge and soteriological divinities became prevalent, and this resulted in the "breaking down of the higher elements of the old religion."⁶⁵

With this trend in mind, it is understandable that Plutarch was perhaps “modernizing” or “rationalizing” the oracle, in a sense, making the practice more comprehensible to his modern audience by interpreting oracular consultation more “scientifically” through a Platonic lens. Here, Plutarch is struggling to incorporate these “anomalies” of divine hierarchy, which had begun to infiltrate society and Delphic cult via the intelligentsia. The undermining of the traditional male Olympian god from his ultimate place of power and, instead, the establishment of a more personal *daemon*, from a philosophical foundation, was more in tune with the religious trends of his day. This fits with the development of syncretism or henotheism seen in the first few centuries of our era, and it is also mirrored in the “theological” oracles from Asia Minor, discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. Plutarch himself seems fond of this idea of syncretism.⁶⁶

Be that as it may, it must be considered that popular Greek belief of earlier generations points to *daemones* as unconventional and, perhaps, seen as threatening to established religion.⁶⁷ If this is the case, it is significant that Plutarch, as a priest at Delphi, could have propounded this idea to describe the decline of oracles, as their very existence could have been viewed as a threat to the tradition practiced at Delphi. Although *daemones* were simply the instruments of the gods, the belief that it was *daemones*, not Apollo, who had control over oracles, may have contributed to the very decline they question. The demotion of the oracle from divine status to the workings of a lesser god, or even a human soul, could possibly have been viewed as a crime against the gods a few centuries earlier (indeed, Socrates comes to mind). Plutarch is our first evidence of this explanation concerning Delphi directly and this inclusion is evidence of a rationalization, at this time, to explain this phenomenon in ways not previously conceived. The traditional practice at Delphi, in which the god speaks directly to the Pythia, who speaks directly to the consultant, is challenged by Cleombrotus’ suggestion of a *daemon* acting as an intermediary. *Daemones* took the place of Apollo, and thus defied the conventional and long-established practice of oracular consultation at Delphi.

The threat of this notion towards traditional Greco-Roman religion can be seen clearly through the typical use of the word in the Christian era, when “all the aspects of religion which were opposed to higher moral conceptions were attributed to the daemons” such as sinister rites and sacrifices (by those who disapproved of them).⁶⁸ Christian writers often employed the argument against oracles, largely based on the grounds that they were controlled by evil *daemones*. Such control of oracles was advocated after Plutarch; Christianity portrayed the *daemones* as evil ministrants, who only deceive mankind and speak falsely, and Christianity exploited those evil *daemones* to attack the oracles and show their futility.⁶⁹ Plutarch’s explanation of the role of *daemones* may not necessarily have contributed to the eventual silence of the oracles, but his essay was certainly used among intellectuals as ammunition against them. Also, significantly, *daemones* were thought to “live in deserted places [a ruined city is called a “habitation of daemons” in *Revelation* 18:2] ...after a city has been destroyed by an enemy, its

inhabitants killed or dragged away as slaves, only the former gods of the community – degraded to the rank of daemons – remain in the ruins.”⁷⁰ This may not have been the exact scenario Plutarch had in mind, but there is a parallel idea in both understandings.

It seems unlikely that Plutarch would have agreed with the proposal of having *daemones* inserted into traditional Delphic theology, considering the threat which the idea potentially posed to traditional Greek religion. The development and chronology of Plutarch’s philosophy and ideas is important here. *De Defectu* was written first, and has the most references to *daemones* of all his Pythian essays. *De E* has far fewer mentions of them and, by the time he wrote *De Pythiae*, the idea had disappeared from his writings. Perhaps Plutarch regarded this idea as counter to the traditional view of Delphi and discouraged pilgrims to visit the sanctuary. It seems as though Plutarch recognized the gravity of this idea, or perhaps it had to be adequately countered, and thus he omitted it from his personal philosophy as well as his writings. Although the suggestions made by Didymus, Ammonius, and Cleombrotus may not be considered part of the Plutarchan “doctrine,” it is clear that Plutarch is still deeply interested in, and concerned with, these ideas; therefore, he has ample reason to record them.

Although the explanation rooted in daemonology is one of the most elaborate and intricate of the four proposals put forth in the *De Defectu*, only a small part of the dialogue is actually concerned with Cleombrotus’ theory. The focus of much of Cleombrotus’ suggestion, that *daemones* somehow influenced the decline of the oracle, is far more centered on the refutation of the idea by the rest of the characters who were present. It is clear from the essay that Cleombrotus is not an intellectual genius, and the rest of the interlocutors “delight in his incompetency.”⁷¹ This leads one to wonder whether Cleombrotus represents the *vox populi*, or rather, whether this digression was simply a way to introduce the long diatribe on the number of worlds in existence and a variety of other philosophical ideas prevalent at the time – keeping in mind the context of the “Second Sophistic.” This tangent is only superficially connected with the rest of the essay, and seems out of place in the context of the rest of the discussion, particularly when the idea is suggested, dealt with at length, and then simply disregarded. Finally, it is unlikely that Plutarch considered this the most valid reason for the obsolescence of oracles because he gives the last say to Lamprias, a more trusted voice within his dialogues.

Ammonius asks Lamprias to explain further the theory that the soul has the capacity for prophecy, and he describes various ways in which the soul can channel the divine. It seems as though it is the Earth, either through water or breath, which is able to “dispose souls to inspiration and impressions of the future.”⁷² In this way, Lamprias alludes to the famed chasm at Delphi:

But in the case of the powers associated with the earth it is reasonable that there should come to pass disappearances in one place and generation in another place...⁷³

This pseudo-scientific theory implies that there could have been some sort of natural phenomenon, which has ceased to exist, and he cites the similar occurrence which involved the disappearance of hot springs and rivers' changing course. The powers of the Earth, often associated with prophecy and chthonic powers, parallel the diminishing powers of the spirits that inspire prophecy (μαντικῶν πνευμάτων): "the power that they possess is not everlasting and ageless, but is subject to changes."⁷⁴

Delphi had a long-standing tradition regarding this phenomenon which is demonstrated by the story of the Python. The Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* explains that after Apollo's birth on Delos, he travels to Delphi to establish an oracle and, upon his arrival, finds a she-dragon already inhabiting the place.⁷⁵ He slays the creature, and his victory symbolically represents the triumph of the sky gods of Olympia over the chthonic gods. So this theory, particularly when compared to the suggestion of the *daemones*, may hold more weight as it is similar to a common legend found at Delphi. Considering it was Lamprias who proposed this view, it may be regarded as more closely aligned with Plutarch's own thoughts than the previous suggestions.

Lamprias also connects the obsolescence of the oracle of Teiresias with the same earthly phenomenon of an earthquake, and the earthly concerns at Delphi are certainly hinted at as a potential reason for the obsolescence as discussed in Plutarch's essay.⁷⁶ This explanation relies on two fundamental aspects of the Platonic inspiration theory. First, that some sort of *pneuma* affects the mind, and second, "that outside of states of insanity or dreaming a physical alteration must take place in the body itself."⁷⁷ In this way Lamprias sets up the necessities for his theory and proceeds to explain them with the presence of the chasm, allowing for the *pneuma* and the presence of the Pythia, which provides the body for the divine voice to speak through.

Finally, at the end of Plutarch's essay, another character, Philip, who had not yet been active in the conversation, recognized they had been drawing repute from the gods;

...we yielded to logic in wrestling the prophetic art from the gods and transferring it merely to the demigods (δαίμονες). But now it seems to me that we are thrusting out these very demigods, in their turn, and driving them away from the oracle and the tripod there, when we resolve the origin of prophecy, or rather its very being and power, into winds and vapors and exhalations.⁷⁸

Much like the replacement of the gods with *daemones*, equating divine prophecy with geological phenomena is, in itself, one of the principal examples of the decline which the characters are discussing. The questioning of such traditional practices is seen as evidence of the gods' equivocal worth. Perhaps this thinking and questioning of the workings of the gods was widespread, as well as a subject of philosophical discussions. This could have contributed to the very perception of Delphi in which an age of rationalism had led to, to some extent, the

undermining of Apollo which was witnessed by Plutarch and the *personae*. Philip even goes on to question why there is a practice of sacrifice and libation as a payment for oracles, when our own very soul possesses this facility.⁷⁹ Lamprias does go on to counter this with explanations that earthly exhalations had been considered gods by generations in the past, so it is still pious to consider them so, but, even with that qualification, it is explicit that this belief is no longer the standard.⁸⁰ Philip, I suggest, shows one aspect of the climate of the day: the traditional gods are becoming less and less reliable and people are looking elsewhere for answers, which is dealt with in detail in Chapters 6 and 7.

It leads one to wonder whether or not oracular responses from Delphi and other shrines were becoming less accurate or less useful at this time. The reason many of the oracular centers were increasingly abandoned may have been due to a demand for less ambiguous oracles. The desire for more clear and concise answers may have cast additional suspicion on Delphi. Further evidence was seen in the argument of *daemones*, by which Apollo seemed to be demoted from his oracle, and it was rather an intermediary being that was responsible for issuing responses. This could have been a clever way to relieve Apollo of the responsibility of inaccuracy. However, this speculation cannot be taken very far, as there is little evidence claiming imprecision at Delphi.

At the end of *De Defectu*, the issue of the oracle's decline is still not resolved. Lamprias says:

These matters...I urge upon you for your frequent consideration, as well as my own, in the belief that they contain much to which objections might be made, and many suggestions looking to a contrary conclusion, all for which the present occasion does not allow us to follow out.⁸¹

It is significant that Plutarch includes these four, widely varying, opinions to explain the relative inactivity of the oracle during his time. This illustrates the diversity of opinion regarding this matter and that perhaps Plutarch himself did not know the answer. This anticlimactic ending is typical of the philosophical discussions and the esoteric writing by which Plutarch was heavily influenced.

Although the reason behind this obsolescence is never fully agreed upon, there is still clear evidence that the oracle was consulted less frequently. Ammonius, says:

...when Greece, since God so willed, had grown strong in cities and the place was thronged with people, they used to employ two prophetic priestesses who were sent down in turn; and a third was appointed to be held in reserve. But today there is one priestess and we do not complain, for she meets every need...⁸²

It does not seem as though he considers this decrease in oracular activity a "decline" but, rather, a sign that the world is going smoothly and people have less need to consult Apollo, another rationalization by Plutarch. However, it

could also be suggested that a decrease in the number of consultants reflects a decline in the oracle; people were seeking advice from Apollo less frequently, which may have diminished both the activity and the popular perception of Delphi. This is confirmed by the number of extant responses from the sanctuary. Here we have evidence that the common literary allegory of “decline” becomes an objective reality – there are fewer people consulting at Delphi. Despite the sentiments of Plutarch and his contemporaries, that this change merely reflects a positive climate in Greece, the decline of Delphi can be seen in the general decrease of inquiries by the second century AD. Plutarch himself attests to the decrease in frequency of consultation at Delphi, albeit in an indirect and philosophical guise.

De Pythiae Oraculis

In addition to the decrease in the number of questions presented to Apollo, further evidence regarding the nature of the sanctuary in the second century AD is seen in Plutarch’s *De Pythiae Oraculis*. Here a decrease in the *importance* of questions is presented. Plutarch tells us, that in his day, the god was consulted on far more mundane matters than he had been in previous eras:

...the questions which men now put to the god are concerned with these conditions...the interrogations are on slight and commonplace matters, like the hypothetical questions of school: if one ought to marry, or to start on a voyage, or to make a loan; and the most important consultations on the part of the States concern the yield from crops.⁸³

For Plutarch, this demonstrates a decline in the woes of Greece, rather than Apollo’s prophetic ability. Even as early as the Hellenistic period, Delphi no longer determined important political development as it had done in the past. The trend of decline in political importance, despite still attracting individuals to consult Apollo, is seen throughout the Hellenistic period until the first and second centuries AD. The change in practice from political to more personal concerns brought to Apollo is also evident in the extant responses.⁸⁴ However, this trend is most clearly demonstrated by the awards of collective *promanteia*, the “priority in consultation” and the individual *proxenia* granted at Delphi.⁸⁵

Pouilloux compiled all the evidence concerning the priority in consultation and recorded the instances of *proxenia* chronologically. Only seven are dated to the third century BC, or later, and the remaining twenty predate that; significantly, only one is extant from the second century AD.⁸⁶ It seems that there were fewer awards granted to communities by the Roman period, a reflection of the declining political importance of consultation. Individual consultants still inquired at Delphi, but questions of both an individual and political nature were nevertheless, steadily declining.

During the Classical period, requests from cities were made by delegations and concerned political, economic, and important religious questions. But by

Plutarch's day the oracle was consulted on largely local sacral and individual business. For example, despite clues concerning current oracles during Plutarch's day, the only contemporary oracle that he records regards the personal consultation of a priest, and his religious anxiety.⁸⁷ A priest of Heracles Misogynos in Phocis got drunk one night and violated the conditions of his priesthood by having sex with a woman. He asked Apollo for forgiveness and the god responded that he forgives all uncontrollable acts.⁸⁸ It must be noted that this oracle was in iambic trimeter, which is the reason Plutarch records it, as it concerns the main topic of the essay, the form of oracular responses.

The remainder of *De Pythiae* is a discussion concerning a change in the form of response issued at Delphi and other features of contemporary Delphic practices. It is also largely modeled on the works of Plato, employing the dialogue technique and is in line with the trends of the "Second Sophistic," mentioned above. New speakers are introduced who concern themselves with the topic of the Pythian responses. They aim to discuss why contemporary oracles are given largely in prose whereas in previous times they were mostly given in hexameter. Diogenianus, who seems particularly attached to traditional beliefs, argues:

The god is Leader of the Muses, and it is right and fair that he should take no less interest in what is called elegance of diction than in the sweetness of sound that is concerned with tunes and songs, and that his utterances should surpass Hesiod and Homer in the excellence of their versification. Yet we observe that most of the oracles are full of metrical and verbal errors and barren diction.⁸⁹

Other characters in the dialogue dispute this assertion, but its inclusion in the dialogue suggests that it was a view held in Plutarch's day. This position, although perhaps not Plutarch's own opinion, seems to be an indication of the literary context of the dialogue. The presumed prevalence of the idea would have motivated Plutarch to counter the claim with a refutation.

Theon offers a rebuttal, by addressing Boëthus with these words: "And if these verses be inferior to Homer's, let us not believe that the god has composed them, but that he supplies the origin of the incitement, and then the prophetic priestesses are moved each in accordance with her natural faculties."⁹⁰ He reminds us that it is the Pythia, not Apollo, who is responsible for the form of prophecy; according to Theon, it seems that the change is in the Pythia's propensity to deliver responses in verse, rather than a decline in the quality of oracular responses themselves.⁹¹

Theon offers several more lines of argument in support of prophetic prose composition. Indeed, the ultimate conclusion which seems to be drawn by the rest of the characters in the dialogue was Theon's. As such, perhaps he represents the closest approximation to Plutarch's own view; it can be suggested that Plutarch wrote this essay to demonstrate that the Pythia was no less credible than in previous centuries because of the form of the responses she issues.⁹² However, the fact that the characters are debating the issue suggests that the

opinion was held, that the prose composition of the oracles signified a decline, and that such composition was unsatisfactory for the public. Therefore, this sentiment is to some degree valid, and perhaps prevalent enough for Plutarch to deem it worth addressing. Theon and others continue to give several reasons to suggest that this is merely a *change* in practice, not necessarily a decline in itself. He even argues: "If, however, we take into consideration the workings of the god and of divine providence, we shall see that the change has been for the better."⁹³

Sarapion, the poet, notes that the astronomical works of Aristarchus and Hipparchus are no less notable because they were written in prose.⁹⁴ As Lewis notes, "the second-century culture of *paideia* commended the virtues of writing in prose."⁹⁵ This suggests that oracles of importance can still be issued in prose without detracting from their significance. Indeed, Theon re-enters the conversation and says that prose oracles from the past "concerned no unimportant matters."⁹⁶ He goes on to cite the example of the Spartan consultation about their war with Athens, clearly an important oracle, yet delivered in prose. In this way, Plutarch demonstrates that prose oracles were not only given in the past, but also for matters of the utmost significance. However, since Plutarch has to counter these claims, it could be that prose oracles were viewed as a symptom of the oracle's decline.

Theon continues to justify the use of prose in prophecy. He claims that since verse poetry had become the standard, it was taken up by charlatans and tricksters. In this way, it was no surprise that verse had "lost all standing with truth and the tripod."⁹⁷ Theon connects this practice with the shrines of Sarapis and the Great Mother; where charlatans made up oracles and gave them to women who are captivated by verse and a poetic vocabulary. His third validation for prose is that there is no longer a need for the vagueness and indirect statements that were employed in the past, since in former times "this or that man assuredly did not go down to consult the oracle about the purchase of a slave or about business," but, rather, kings and tyrants consulted it about their own political actions.⁹⁸ Therefore, "it was not to the advantage of those concerned with the oracle to vex and provoke these men by unfriendliness through their hearing many of the things that they did not wish to hear."⁹⁹ The oracle did not want to offend the clientele and so couched unfavorable predictions in cryptic language; in this way the blame or distaste could not be directed at the oracle. Two issues in the essay become linked – answers to everyday questions given in everyday language. Now that common people were addressing the god, Apollo had no need to protect himself with cryptic language, as the clientele did not have the influence to criticize the god if an unfavorable oracle was issued.

Theon's next point in the argument is the mnemonic value of verse which is no longer a necessity. Since passages written in verse are easier to remember, they were of great value to previous generations. Yet, in Plutarch's time, writing was far more prevalent and society relied less on memory and more on the written word, which appeared more frequently in prose.¹⁰⁰

Finally, his last case in favor of prose composition was that people were not seeking advice from Apollo about complicated matters but rather for more ordinary concerns. He cites some of these to demonstrate that by disguising such things in verse, the responses would serve to promote the oracle's repute.¹⁰¹ The Pythia has no need for the praise or blame of men. She simply wants to convey the words of Apollo, and prose suffices for the types of questions put forth, namely more mundane, personal issues. Plutarch does not regard these changes – a decline in the number of consultants, the importance of the issues raised, or the change from hexameter to prose – as a decline in Apollo's presence at Delphi. This is due to the fact that Delphi, at this time, was experiencing a revival; however, this revival does not concern or stem from the oracles, but rather the sanctuary itself.

The revival of Delphi

The final passages of *De Pythiae* provide evidence for a revival of the sanctuary during the time the essays were written, and these directly contradict the previous discussions. Plutarch tells us that:

But for us the god grants clearer, stronger, and plainer evidence than this by bringing about after a drought, so to speak, of earlier desolation and poverty, affluence, splendor, and honor. It is true that I feel kindly toward the man who has been the leader (τὸν καθηγμένον) in our administration and has planned and carried out practically all that has been done...¹⁰²

Now, for Plutarch, the god is certainly at Delphi and *still* speaks through his oracle, but he is also convinced that this splendor witnessed at Delphi is due to both human diligence and the god. It was human diligence that renovated and rebuilt the temple and the sanctuary at Delphi:

You yourselves, of course, see many additions in the form of buildings not here before and many restored that were dilapidated and in ruins...because of the affluence here it is acquiring a pattern and form and an adornment of shrines and meeting-places...¹⁰³

The buildings to which he refers include a new fountain, aqueduct and walls built with the income of the god; a house for the Pythia, a library, and a building with an uncertain function called a "structorium."¹⁰⁴ Despite the impression of oracular decline apparent in Plutarch's essays, second-century Delphi was in fact a sanctuary bustling with rebuilding.¹⁰⁵

This aspect is particularly significant in light of the evidence from Plutarch. He was contemporaneous with both an obsolescence of oracles as well as a revival of the sanctuary.¹⁰⁶ For Plutarch, this renovation and rebuilding at Delphi is directly linked to Apollo's oracle. There is, however, strong evidence which suggests that this revival was due to the promotion of Delphi through

Plutarch's writings, as well as the patronage of Roman emperors, particularly Domitian and Hadrian. The Amphictyony invested heavily in the new buildings, which were to be erected during Plutarch's day, concurrent with the revival.¹⁰⁷ Athanassiadi interprets this passage from Plutarch to mean that "the oracle's renewed international appeal caused the Amphictyonic League to undertake an extensive program of restoration: dilapidated buildings had been restored, new monuments had been erected and the sanctuary was filled as of old with dedicatory offerings."¹⁰⁸ However, to use a famous story of Plutarch, this is a chicken and egg scenario.¹⁰⁹ It is difficult to determine whether the oracle prompted the rebuilding, or the rebuilding led to a revival. The evidence seems to suggest that the renovation was needed *in order to revive* the sanctuary. This is reinforced by the extensive rebuilding programs initiated by Hadrian throughout the empire.¹¹⁰

Plutarch points out several monuments along the Sacred Way, while associating many divine events with their construction or dedication. The buildings become a link to the gods through an architectural landscape and contain an essence of the gods within them.¹¹¹ Indeed, this is explicit:

Aristotle used to say that only Homer could compose poetry in which the words moved thanks to their energy. I would have to say that among dedications, too, the ones made here also can move and give signs in accordance with the god's foreknowledge; no part of them is empty or senseless, rather all are full of the divine.¹¹²

Delphi did have "international" fame, owing indeed to the oracle. But as we have seen, the oracle no longer assisted in significant political and Panhellenic concerns. The rebuilding must have come from the popularity of the sanctuary itself, the antiquity and past fame of the oracle, as well as interest from Roman emperors. As we shall see in Chapter 3, the site of Delphi had much more to offer than simply the oracle, particularly in regard to "international" appeal. The revival of the sanctuary, like the decline of the oracle, is difficult to explain precisely.

The evidence may never securely date the revival, but it seems that it may have its beginnings in the rebuilding of the temple in the first century AD.¹¹³ Only a few years after Sulla sacked the temple of Apollo, and plundered all its accumulated riches to fund the war with Mithridates in 87 or 86 BC, northern tribes, either Thracians or Illyrians, sacked Delphi and burned the temple in 83 BC.¹¹⁴ Although Marc Antony promised to restore the temple, while touring Greece in the 30s BC, his promise was never fulfilled.¹¹⁵ Strabo notes, a few decades later, that during his day the temple at Delphi is very poor, but several votive offerings still remain despite various plunderings; the sanctuary is poor in the sense of money, artistic contributions, the Pythian Games as well as recorded oracles.¹¹⁶ Perhaps Greece generally, and Delphi specifically, did not have enough available funds to rebuild the temple and the religious center of Greece had fallen by the wayside. The temple was crucial for oracular operation and,

with it in disrepair, surely a decrease in consultations would continue until it was fixed. It was not until the Emperor Domitian restored the temple of Apollo, in AD 84 just before Plutarch became priest that Delphi's revival began.¹¹⁷

Plutarch does not mention Domitian's efforts specifically, but Plutarch may have intentionally omitted his attribution based on the *damnatio memoriae*, the official obliteration of the emperor's name from public documents after his assassination.¹¹⁸ Archeological evidence does testify to Domitian's contribution to Delphi. Not only did he rebuild the temple, but he also preserved the Pythian Games in their traditional form. He sent correspondence to Delphi which opposed any enhancements to Delphi, particularly the Games.¹¹⁹ Apparently, he was countering the proposal of the Amphictyony which attempted to change the process of the Pythian Games.¹²⁰ Perhaps by maintaining tradition, Domitian strove to preserve the reputation of the Games.

Although Domitian's contribution to Delphi is significant, the patronage shown by Hadrian was crucial to the revival of the sanctuary. As one of the most philhellenic of all the emperors, it is no surprise that he assisted in the revival at Delphi, throughout his reign, from AD 117–138. There is a considerable amount of epigraphic evidence concerning Hadrian at Delphi which attests to the patronage he had shown there.¹²¹ Statues of the emperor were erected by the Delphians and the Amphictyony, which suggest a tribute to his continued interest in the shrine.¹²² Hadrian sent a number of letters to Delphi recognizing the antiquity of the site, as well as the supremacy of Apollo. Hadrian's reign also corresponds to the greatest volume and variety of coins issued at Delphi.¹²³ Many of these coins depicted monuments and statues one could see at Delphi in the first half of the second century AD. It is noteworthy that aspects of the sanctuary (as opposed to Apollo or the Pythia) were minted frequently during this time. The time of this revival can be securely placed between the building of the temple, in the final decades of the first century AD, until the end of the Antonine dynasty at the end of the second century AD.

Hadrian himself consulted the oracle. He desired to know the birthplace of Homer, probably because so many cities claimed the fame ought to lie with them, and received a response in hexameter that he was from Ithaca and included the names of his immediate family.¹²⁴ This emperor's interest and patronage at Delphi did not necessarily revive the oracle *per se*. Only four or five oracular responses can be dated to the reigns of Domitian and Hadrian, the precise time of revival at Delphi as established by modern authors.¹²⁵ Rather, the revival seems to be oriented at the sanctuary itself rather than oracular practice at Delphi.

At the end of the first and the beginning of the second centuries AD, as epigraphic evidence attests, the Athenians returned to the temple after a period of "neglect" and an increase in patronage is paid to Apollo.¹²⁶ Patronage toward the sanctuary was seen as a way to gain political and popular support by connecting leaders to the traditional center of Greece. This patronage facilitated the rebuilding, which assisted in the revival – it is only after commencement of

the reconstruction of the sanctuary, and particularly the temple, that Delphi witnessed any signs of a renaissance.

It is clear, then, that Plutarch witnessed (or was aware of) both revival and decline at Delphi. The oracle was consulted less frequently and for less important matters but the sanctuary itself continued to be revered, adorned, and visited. The confusion may be explained, to some extent, by the later date of composition of *De Pythiae*. It seems to exhibit more consolidated ideas, which suggest a development in Plutarch's own thought.¹²⁷ Although *De Defectu* was probably Plutarch's earliest essay concerning Delphi, and *De Pythiae* was presumably his last, they were both written sometime between AD 95–115.¹²⁸ This suggests that at the beginning of Plutarch's priesthood, Delphi was in a state of weakness and, during the course of it, the sanctuary experienced a revival. Plutarch hints that this may indeed be the case, as he records that the revival of the sanctuary had "been brought about in a short time," presumably between the composition of the two essays.¹²⁹

The date of composition is important, but the dramatic date of the essays may also give an insight into the disparities of their content. *De Defectu* was written while Plutarch was priest at Delphi, but "takes place" a decade or so earlier. Much debate has surrounded the date of the setting of the essay, but AD 83 seems the most likely dramatic date.¹³⁰ This places the essay in the years before the revival at Delphi, and perhaps before the rebuilding of the temple. It is reasonable, then, to suppose that Plutarch wanted to stress the revival, and wrote the essay to demonstrate the state of Delphi before the rebuilding of the temple by Domitian and the patronage of Hadrian in order to demonstrate a contrast with earlier periods.

From the examination of Plutarch's essays, a contradictory picture of Delphi in the second century AD emerges: a perceived decline of the oracle alongside a bustling revival of the sanctuary. It is clear that additional evidence must be examined in order to better grasp the state of the oracle and the site in the second century and beyond. This must be assessed not only by oracular practice, but the use and conception of sacred space at the sanctuary. The next chapter will examine other sources, particularly Strabo and Pausanias, as well as archeological evidence, to give a fuller, more comprehensive picture of Delphi's status and operation in the second century AD. This examination is further enhanced by way of spatial analysis and archeological evidence which demonstrates that while the oracle may have been perceived to have decline, the sanctuary continued to thrive. The cultural memory of Greece certainly continued to aid in Delphi's popularity and patronage, and it is to the assessment of these ideas that we now turn.

Notes

- 1 Plut. *De def. or.* 413a. K. Heineman trans.
- 2 See Cic. *Div.* 1.19.37–38 and Strabo 9.3.4. Other literary works of the period attest to a decline, see Luc. *BC* 5.68–70, Dio Cass. 62.14.2, and Juvenal *Sat.* 6.553–556.

- 3 Lamberton (2001), pp. 53–55 notes that in an inscription on a statue base honoring Hadrian (CIG 1713 = Dittenburger Syll³ 829), Plutarch “is specifically called priest (*hiereus*), the highest official of the shrine and a position of considerable responsibility, both fiscal and liturgical.” See also *Quaestiones Convivales* 700E; and *An seni respublica gerenda sit* 785c. See also Ogilvie (1967), p. 108. His connections with Delphi are attested at another statue at the site; see Dittenburger Syll³ 843A (Base of a statue of Plutarch at Delphi). See also Barrow (1967).
- 4 Only five of the Greek *Lives* omit any reference to Delphi (*Alcibiades*, *Pyrrhus*, *Cimon*, *Eumenes*, *Dion*) and there are eight references to Delphi in the Roman *Lives* (*Romulus* 9; *Camillus* 4; *Marcellus* 3, 8; *Fabius Maximus* 18; *Flaminius* 12, 16; *Aemilius Paullus* 28; 36; *Sulla* 12, 19; *Cicero* 5.); see Brenk (1977), p. 244.
- 5 Plutarch (*Alex.* 1.2) explicitly announces his method and aims of his parallel *Lives* in the biography of Alexander, “For it is not Histories that I am writing, but Lives; and in the most illustrious deeds there is not always a manifestation of virtue or vice, nay, a slight thing like a phrase or a jest often makes a greater revelation of character than battles where thousands fall, or the greatest armaments, or sieges of cities,” (οὔτε γὰρ ἱστορίας γράφομεν, ἀλλὰ βίους, οὔτε ταῖς ἐπιφανεστάταις πράξεσι πάντως ἔνεστι δῆλωσις ἀρετῆς ἢ κακίας, ἀλλὰ πρᾶγμα βραχὺ πολλάκις καὶ ῥῆμα καὶ παιδιὰ τις ἔμφασιν ἤθους ἐποίησε μᾶλλον ἢ μάχαι μυριόνηκροι καὶ παρατάξεις αἱ μέγισται καὶ πολιορκίαι πόλεων), B.Perrin trans. So when analyzing the *Lives*, one must keep in mind that his work is aimed at a moral assessment of the character’s life, not a detailed history. On the other hand, *Moralia* is an eclectic compilation of 78 different essays ranging in content and scope from correct behavior at dinner parties to religious observances. Like the *Lives*, these essays give insight into Greek and Roman life, largely from a philosophic perspective as well as containing a moral and religious quality.
- 6 Brenk (1977), p. 85.
- 7 The ‘I’ in *De Defectu Oraculorum* is ultimately identified as Lamprias, which suggests that perhaps Plutarch’s opinion can be most closely associated with his brother’s. On the authority of the interlocutors, see Lamberton (2001). Theon seems to most closely represent Plutarch’s opinion in *De Pyth. or.* See Flacelière (1937), pp. 19–20; Rollins (1975), p. 103. Finally, Ammonius gives the final word in *De E* and seems to carry the authority that the others lack.
- 8 Barrow (1967), p. xiv, summarizes the evidence for Plutarch’s time as priest at the sanctuary.
- 9 Plut. *An seni respublica gerenda sit* 785c.
- 10 Parke (1940) identifies three sets of officials at the sanctuary: ὄσοι, προφῆται, and ἱερεῖς. Still, exact duties of these positions are unclear. Plutarch’s career and the degree of his knowledge of Delphic consultations remain speculative. See Lewis (2004), pp. 85–88.
- 11 Plut. *De def. or.* 437c, “ὅ δὲ τεκμηρίῳ χρῶμαι, μάρτυρας ἔχω καὶ ξένους πολλοὺς καὶ τοὺς θεραπεύοντας τὸ ἱερὸν ἅπαντας.” F. Cole Babbitt trans.
- 12 Plut. *Sol.* 11.2, “...in the ‘records of Delphi’ it is stated...” (Δελφῶν ὑπομνήμασιν) is an allusion to certain archives to which Plutarch had access. The nature of these records remains unclear.
- 13 Dick (1965), p. 460. See also Brenk (1977), pp. 118–119.
- 14 Plut. *De Pyth. or.* 409a. See Homolle (1896); Flacelière (1971); and P&W, p. 284. For a revival in Domitian’s reign (AD 81–96), see Weir (2004), esp. p. 163. Levin (1989), p. 1606 argues that it was Plutarch who brought the revival to the sanctuary. For Plutarch’s role in this revival see Swain (1991), pp. 318–330, which is supported by Stadter, (2002), pp. 19–31. Stadter analyzes Plutarch’s relations with Rome, which would have facilitated an increased interest at Delphi.
- 15 Plut. *De Pyth. or.* 408b–c; Plut. *De def. or.* 414b–c. These references will be analyzed in turn.

- 16 The decline by the Severan period (AD 193–235) is widely accepted. See P&W, pp. 189 and 214; Homolle (1896), p. 705. Arnush (2006), p. 108; Pouilloux (1952), pp. 484–513; Athanassiadi (1989), pp. 271–278; Levin (1989), pp. 1599–1649; Parker (1985); Morgan (1989), pp. 17–42 esp. p. 36. For suggestions of signs of an earlier decline, see Fairbanks (1906) and Casson (1914).
- 17 Goldhill (2001), p. 14.
- 18 See Anderson (1993) and Bowie (1970) for the debate surrounding the definition of this term.
- 19 Tac. *Dial.* 1, “*Saepe ex me requiris, Iuste Fabi, cur, cum priora saecula tot eminentium oratorum ingeniis gloriaeque floruerint, nostra potissimum aetas deserta et laude eloquentiae orbata vix nomen ipsum oratoris retineat.*” S. Bryant trans.
- 20 Longin. 44, “*τοσαύτη λόγων κοσμική τις ἐπέχει τὸν βίον ἀφορία.*” S. Halliwell trans.
- 21 See also Dio Chrysostom, *Euboean Discourse* and Aristides, *To Rome*.
- 22 See Plut. *De def. or.* 414c. Strabo (17.1.43) also mentions the general decline of oracles throughout the region.
- 23 The Greek title, *Περὶ τῶν Ἐκλειπομένων Χρηστηρίων* will be exchanged for the more traditional Latin title, *De Defectu Oraculorum*.
- 24 Plut. *De def. or.* 411e, “*νῦν ἔοικεν ὑπομαραίνεσθαι.*”
- 25 Plut. *De def. or.* 411e–f, “*οὐδέν’ ἔφη ‘δεῖ περὶ τῶν ἐπεὶ πυνθάνεσθαι καὶ διαπορεῖν τὴν ἐνταῦθα τῶν χρηστηρίων ἀμαρῶσιν, μᾶλλον δὲ πλὴν ἐνὸς ἢ δυεῖν ἀπάντων ἐκλειψιν ὀρῶντας: ἀλλ’ ἐκεῖνο σκοπεῖν, δι’ ἣν αἰτίαν οὕτως ἐξησθένηκε.*”
- 26 Plut. *De def. or.* 411f–412a, “*τῶν δ’ ἄλλων τὰ μὲν σιγὴ τὰ δὲ παντελὴς ἐρημία κατέσχηκε.*”
- 27 Plut. *De def. or.* 412a–412d, their function in the Persian Wars is explained; at 414a–b, these same oracles are described as desolate or entirely gone.
- 28 Plut. *De def. or.* 413a, “*θαυμαστὸν γὰρ ἐστίν, εἰ τοσαύτης κακίας ὑποκεχυμένης; μὴ μόνον, ὥς προεῖπεν Ἡσίοδος, Αἰδῶς καὶ Νέμεσις τὸν ἀνθρώπινον βίον ἀπολελοῖτασιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ πρόνοια θεῶν συσκευασαμένη τὰ χρηστήρια πανταχόθεν οἴχεται.*”
- 29 Plut. *De def. or.* 413c–d, “*οὐκ εἰκὸς ἀπαξιῶν φωνῆς τοὺς νῦν ἀνθρώπους, οἷς αἰτιὸς ἐστὶ γενέσεως καὶ τροφῆς καὶ τοῦ εἶναι καὶ φρονεῖν.*”
- 30 Pl. *Tim.* 29a.
- 31 Plut. *De def. or.* 413a, “*συσκευασαμένη τὰ χρηστήρια πανταχόθεν οἴχεται.*”
- 32 Plut. *De def. or.* 414a and 414c indicates that shepherds are associated with wastelands. See Stadter (2002).
- 33 Plut. *De def. or.* 411e, “*μᾶλλον δὲ πλὴν ἐνὸς ἢ δυεῖν ἀπάντων ἐκλειψιν ὀρῶντας.*”
- 34 Plut. *De def. or.* 413e, “*ὁ γὰρ ἄλλω τινὶ καὶ μὴ θεοῦ γνώμῃ τὰ παυσάμενα τῶν χρηστηρίων ἐκλειπεῖν ἡγούμενος, ὑπόνοιαν δίδωσι τοῦ μὴ γίνεσθαι μηδ’ εἶναι διὰ τὸν θεὸν ἀλλ’ ἐτέρῳ τινὶ τρόπῳ νομίζειν. οὐ γὰρ ἄλλη γέ τις ἔστι μείζων οὐδὲ κρείττων δύναμις, ὥστ’ ἀναιρεῖν καὶ ἀφανίζειν ἔργον θεοῦ τὴν μαντικὴν οὖσαν.*”
- 35 Plut. *De def. or.* 414a, “*οὐδὲν οὖν ἕτερον ἢ τὸ πολλὰ καταλιπεῖν χρηστήρια τὸν θεὸν ἢ τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἐλέγχειν τὴν ἐρημίαν.*” It is interesting to note that Apollo was the reason offered for the revival at Delphi in Plut. *De Pyth. or.* 409b–c.
- 36 Plutarch’s assertion that Greece was experiencing a decline in population has inspired demographers to study the phenomenon, see Hansen (2006); Scheidel (2003).
- 37 Plut. *De def. or.* 418c–d, “*ὅτι τοῖς περὶ τὰ μαντεῖα καὶ χρηστήρια τεταγμένοις δαίμονις ἐκλείπουσι τε κομῶν συνεκλείπει τὰ τοιαῦτα, καὶ φυγόντων ἢ μεταστάντων ἀποβάλλει τὴν δύναμιν, εἴτα παρόντων αὐτῶν διὰ χρόνου πολλοῦ καθάπερ ὄργανα φθέγγεται τῶν χρωμένων ἐπιστάντων καὶ παρόντων.*”
- 38 Plutarch himself makes the analogy, *De def. or.* 410a.

- 39 Brenk (1977), pp. 90–91.
- 40 Plut. *De def. or.* 418e, “τὸ μὲν ἐφεστάναι τοῖς χρηστηρίοις” εἶπε ‘μὴ θεοὺς οἷς ἀπηλλάχθαι τῶν περὶ γῆν προσήκόν ἐστιν, ἀλλὰ δαίμονας ὑπηρετάς θεῶν...”
- 41 Still, it is not an entirely alien idea to associate oracles and *daemones*. The author of *Epinomis* describes *daemones* as intermediary beings whose agency is at work in both dreams and oracles (985B–C). Also, many of the Stoics, Pythagoreans, and Platonists attributed the workings of oracles to *daemones*. See Gasparro (1997), p. 76. Additionally, inscriptions from Dodona demonstrate the belief in *daemones*; they are included in oracular queries there which suggest an appeal to them in oracular matters. See Goldschmidt (1950), p. 31. Apuleius also mentions their assumed place at oracles in his *De Deo Socratis* (4.128, 6.132). However, the traditional view of Delphi was that Apollo ministered his own oracle.
- 42 Homer used the word as a vague synonym for a god (θεός), usually for one who is not immediately recognized. Additionally, *daemones* in Homer most often affect the *thumos* of the individual rather than entire communities, and so although they act as intermediaries (a good example occurs at *Iliad* 17.98, 17.104.), they do not hold the responsibilities which Cleombrotus suggests. Hesiod was the first to distinguish four classes of rational beings: gods (θεοὶ), demigods (δαίμονες), heroes (ἥρωες), and men (ἄνθρωποι), in a hierarchal order, showing that *daemones* are thought to be more similar to gods than to men (Hesiod *Op.* 122).
- 43 Plut. *De gen.* 580f.
- 44 Schibili (1993), p. 154. There was no strict definition of the word before Plato and, even after, there was hardly a systematized “demonology.” For example, the distinction between good and bad *daemones* was not a solidified idea before the fourth century.
- 45 Pl. *Symp.* 202e, “ἐρμηνεῦον καὶ διαπορθμεῦον θεοῖς τὰ παρ’ ἀνθρώπων καὶ ἀνθρώποις τὰ παρὰ θεῶν.” J. Burnet trans.
- 46 Pl. *Epin.* 985b 1–3. See *Suda* (418), where Philippus of Opus is identified as an astronomer.
- 47 Schibili (1993), p. 154.
- 48 Plut. *De def. or.* 416d.
- 49 Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 361a, “ὥς τῶν δαιμόνων μικτὴν καὶ ἀνώμαλον φύσιν ἐχόντων καὶ προαίρεσιν.” F. Cole Babbitt trans.
- 50 Plut. *De gen.* 593d.
- 51 Pl. *Symp.* 202e–203a, “ἐρμηνεῦον καὶ διαπορθμεῦον θεοῖς τὰ παρ’ ἀνθρώπων καὶ ἀνθρώποις τὰ παρὰ θεῶν, τῶν μὲν τὰς δεήσεις καὶ θυσίας, τῶν δὲ τὰς ἐπιτάξεις τε καὶ ἀμοιβὰς τῶν θυσιῶν, ἐν μέσῳ δὲ ὃν ἀμφοτέρων συμπληροῖ, ὥστε τὸ πᾶν αὐτὸ αὐτῷ συνδεδέσθαι. διὰ τούτου καὶ ἡ μαντικὴ πᾶσα χωρεῖ καὶ ἡ τῶν ἱερέων τέχνη τῶν τε περὶ τὰς θυσίας καὶ τελετὰς καὶ τὰς ἐπωδὰς καὶ τὴν μαντείαν πᾶσαν καὶ γοητείαν. θεὸς δὲ ἀνθρώπῳ οὐ μείγνυται, ἀλλὰ διὰ τούτου πᾶσά ἐστιν ἡ ὁμιλία καὶ ἡ διάλεκτος θεοῖς πρὸς ἀνθρώπους, καὶ ἐργηγορόσι καὶ καθεύδουσι: καὶ ὁ μὲν περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα σοφὸς δαιμόνιος ἀνὴρ, ὁ δὲ ἄλλο τι σοφὸς ὢν ἢ περὶ τέχνας ἢ χειρουργίας τινὰς βάνασος. οὗτοι δὲ οἱ δαίμονες πολλοὶ καὶ παντοδαποὶ εἰσιν, εἰς δὲ τούτων ἐστὶ καὶ ὁ Ἐρως.” J. Burnet trans.
- 52 Plut. *De def. or.* 431.
- 53 Plut. *De def. or.* 416c–417c. The exposure to *πάθη* can impart evil characteristics to certain *daemones*.
- 54 Schibili (1993), p. 157, see also Plut. *De fac.* 944c.
- 55 There is a parallel in Plato’s *Ion* 536a: poetry passes from Muses, to inspired poet, to interpreter, and so down to an audience: three stages, with some divine knowledge (associated with Apollo) passing from above down to ordinary humans. “You, the rhapsode and actor, are the middle ring; the poet himself is the first; but it is the god who through the whole series draws the souls of men whithersoever he pleases, making the power of one depend on the other. And,

just as from the magnet, there is a mighty chain of choric performers and masters and under-masters suspended by side-connections from the rings that hang down from the Muse. One poet is suspended from one Muse, another from another,” (ῥαψωδὸς καὶ ὑποκριτής, ὁ δὲ πρῶτος αὐτὸς ὁ ποιητής: ὁ δὲ θεὸς διὰ πάντων τούτων ἔλκει τὴν ψυχὴν ὅποι ἂν βούληται τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἀνακρεμαννὺς ἐξ ἀλλήλων τὴν δύναμιν. καὶ ὥσπερ ἐκ τῆς λίθου ἐκείνης ὀρμαθὸς πάμπολυς ἐξήρηται χορευτῶν τε καὶ διδασκάλων καὶ ὑποδιδασκάλων, ἐκ πλαγίου ἐξηρημένων τῶν τῆς Μούσης ἐκκρεμαμένων δακτυλίων. καὶ ὁ μὲν τῶν ποιητῶν ἐξ ἄλλης Μούσης, ὁ δὲ ἐξ ἄλλης ἐξήρηται—ὀνομάζομεν δὲ αὐτὸ κατέχεται, τὸ δέ). W.R.M. Lamb trans. Although this alludes to a similar concept, the application of *daemones* to Delphi is novel and diverges from the traditional and customary portrayal of the oracular administration.

- 56 McNerney (2002), p. 47 reckons that Plutarch posited the *daemones* as intermediaries at the oracle to help explain the decline in religious activity without offending the gods. I add to this, that Plutarch chose *daemones* because of his Platonic tendencies. It is important to note the intermediary between gods and men, for the Neoplatonists, became the World-Soul. Plutarch was a stepping stone between Classical and Late Antique ideas. Contra, see Brenk (1973 and 1997).
- 57 Plut. *De def. or.* 432a, “οὕτως ἡ ψυχὴ τὴν μαντικὴν οὐκ ἐπικτᾶται δύναμιν ἐκβάσα τοῦ σώματος... ἔχουσα καὶ νῦν...” It could be that this theory of *daemones* as nothing more than human souls most clearly represents Plutarch’s own view on the subject. See Brenk (1977), p. 130.
- 58 Pl. *Phdr.* 245c, “First, then, we must learn the truth about the soul divine and human by observing how it acts and is acted upon. And the beginning of our proof is as follows: every soul is immortal. For that which is ever moving is immortal but that which moves something else or is moved by something else, when it ceases to move, ceases to live,” (δεῖ οὖν πρῶτον ψυχῆς φύσεως περὶ θείας τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνης ἰδόντα πάθη τε καὶ ἔργα τάληθες νοῆσαι: ἀρχὴ δὲ ἀποδείξεως ἦδε. ψυχὴ πᾶσα ἀθάνατος. τὸ γὰρ ἀεικίνητον ἀθάνατον: τὸ δ’ ἄλλο κινεῖται καὶ ὑπ’ ἄλλου κινούμενον, παύσαν ἔχον κινήσεως, παύσαν ἔχει ζωῆς). H.N. Fowler trans.
- 59 Plut. *De def. or.* 415b–c.
- 60 Plut. *De def. or.* 419c.
- 61 Brenk (1977), p. 112. He also cites his use of *daemones* in *Dion* and *Brutus* which further reinforces this point. Contra, see Radek (2000), pp. 141–142, who addresses other concerns of Plutarch’s view of various Platonic ideas, particularly the soul. He says, “It is hardly thinkable that Plutarch would associate with the Delphic cult a philosophical theory he would not take seriously in one way or another.”
- 62 Flacelière (1943), p. 72.
- 63 Nilsson (1943), pp. 255–256. See also MacMullen (1981); Rives (2007); and Ezquerro (2008).
- 64 The best example of this is the idealization of the sun, which had always played a prominent role in Greek religion. Yet Plato, in his *Republic* (6.508a), gives supreme place to the sun as the author and cause of our vision and of the material world. Plutarch incorporates this idea into his writings as well; he equates Apollo with the sun, thereby elevating the god within a new religious framework (*De E* 386B and 393D). This would have sustained Apollo’s popularity while eastern gods were infiltrating Greek religion. See Schindler (2008).
- 65 Nilsson (1943), p. 257. This trend, and its impact on Delphi, will be treated in Chapter 7.
- 66 Plut. *De E* 393b–d. Also, at *De E* 388e–389b where Plutarch describes the nature of Apollo and Dionysus who, in some ways, become the same god but is only called by the best of his known names.

- 67 For example, the author of the Derveni papyrus is concerned with the appeasement of *daemones* conceived of as spirits of the dead, but equates gods with natural forces, so that they are apparently not similarly threatening. See Tsantsanoglou (2001), pp. 93–128.
- 68 Nilsson (1943), p. 263.
- 69 For example, see Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 5.1. Also Augustine *De civ. D.* This position was maintained until the fifteenth century and the monumental work of Fontenelle (1688); his treatise, *Histoire des oracles*, argued that oracles were not administered by *daemones*.
- 70 Luck (1985), p. 164.
- 71 Brenk (1977), p. 112.
- 72 Plut. *De def. or.* 433c, “...ψυχὰς ἐνθουσιαστικῶς διατίθησι καὶ φαντασιαστικῶς τοῦ μέλλοντος...” Indeed, the Greeks had long believed that prophetic ability came from the earth.
- 73 Plut. *De def. or.* 433f, “τῶν δὲ περὶ αὐτὴν δυνάμεων πῇ μὲν ἐκλείνεις πῇ δὲ γενέσεις ἀλλαχοῦ δὲ μεταστάσεις καὶ μεταρροίας...” Later, Porphyry (Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 5.15.6–16.1= fr. 322F) echoes this same sentiment: “Wide Earth herself took some oracles back into her underground bosom; others were destroyed by long-lasting Time. By now, there are left under Helios who sends light to the humans only the divine water in the valley of Didyma, and the one of Pytho under the high peaks of Parnassus, and the spring in Claros, a narrow opening for a prophesying voice” (καὶ τὰ μὲν ἄψ χθονίοισιν ὑπαὶ κόλοισιν ἔδεκτο αὐτὴ γαῖα χανοῦσα, τὰ δ’ ὤλεσε μυρίος αἰὼν. μούνη δ’ Ἡελίῳ φαεσιμβρότῳ εἰσέτ’ ἔασι ἐν Διδύμων γυάλοις Μυκαλήϊον ἐνθεὸν ὕδωρ Πυθῶνός τ’ ἀνὰ πέζαν ὑπαὶ Παρνάσιον αἶψος καὶ κρναὴ Κλαρή, τρηχὺ στόμα φοιβάδος ὁμοφῆς). As cited by Graf (2009), p. 55. This suggests that, by Porphyry’s day, Didyma, Claros, and Delphi were the prominent remaining oracles, a notion which is addressed in Chapters 4 and 5.
- 74 Plut. *De def. or.* 434b, “ὥς οὐκ ἔχόντων αἰδίων οὐδ’ ἀγήρων τὴν δύναμιν ἀλλ’ ὑποκειμένην μεταβολαῖς.”
- 75 *Hymn to Apollo*, 3.182–387.
- 76 Plut. *De def. or.* 434c.
- 77 Brenk (1977), p. 126. See also Pl. *Tim.* 86e–87a and 71a–72a respectively.
- 78 Plut. *De def. or.* 435a, “παρεχωρήσαμεν ἐκ τῶν θεῶν τὴν μαντικὴν ἐς δαίμονας ἀτεχνῶς ἀποδιοπομπουμένῳ νυνὶ δέ μοι δοκοῦμεν αὐτοὺς πάλιν ἐκείνους ἐξωθεῖν καὶ ἀπελαύνειν ἐνθένδε τοῦ χρηστηρίου καὶ τοῦ τρίποδος, εἰς πνεύματα καὶ ἀτμούς καὶ ἀναθυμιάσεις τὴν τῆς μαντικῆς ἀρχὴν μᾶλλον δὲ τὴν οὐσίαν αὐτὴν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν ἀναλύοντες.”
- 79 Plut. *De def. or.* 435b–c.
- 80 Plut. *De def. or.* 437a.
- 81 Plut. *De def. or.* 438d–e, “ταῦτ...πολλάκις ἀνασκέπτεσθαι καὶ ὑμᾶς παρακαλῶ καὶ ἑμαυτόν, ὥς ἔχοντα πολλὰς ἀντιλήψεις καὶ ὑπονοίας πρὸς τοὺνναντίον, ἃς ὁ καιρὸς οὐ παρέχει πάσας ἐπεξελεθεῖν.”
- 82 Plut. *De def. or.* 414b–c, “ἐπεὶ δὲ τῷ θεῷ δόξαν οὕτως ἢ θ’ Ἑλλάς ἐρρώσθη πόλεσι καὶ τὸ χωρίον ἀνθρώποις ἐπλήθυνε, δυσὶν ἐχρῶντο προφήτισιν ἐν μέρει καθιεμέναις, καὶ τρίτῃ δ’ ἐφεδρὸς ἦν ἀποδεδειγμένη. νῦν δ’ ἔστι μία προφήτις, καὶ οὐκ ἐγκαλοῦμεν ἐξαρκεῖ γὰρ αὕτη τοῖς δεομένοις. οὐ τοῖνυν αἰτιατέον οὐδὲ τὸν θεόν: ἡ γὰρ οὕσα μαντικὴ καὶ διαμένουσα πᾶσιν ἐστὶν ἱκανὴ καὶ πάντας ἀποπέμπει τυγχάνοντας ὧν χρήζουσιν.” Lloyd-Jones (1976), p. 66 confuses this matter, “in Plutarch’s time there were two Pythias with a third in reserve, working in shifts.” And Stoneman (2011), p. 27, seems to follow this error: “in Plutarch’s day oracular business was so heavy that two Pythias were in constant operation, with a spare one in reserve.” Clearly, the phrase “νῦν δ’ ἔστι μία προφήτις” states “but now there is one prophetess”; this cannot refer to anything other than Plutarch’s own time.

- 83 Plut. *De Pyth. or.* 408b–c, “περὶ ὧν ἐρωτῶσι τὸν θεόν, ἀγαπῶ μὲν ἔγωγε καὶ ἀσπάζομαι... ὅπου δὲ ποικίλον οὐδὲν οὐδ’ ἀπόρρητον οὐδὲ δεινόν, ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ πράγμασι μικροῖς καὶ δημοτικοῖς ἐρωτήσεις οἷον ἐν σχολῇ προτάσεις ‘εἰ γαμητέον’ ‘εἰ πλευστέον’ ‘εἰ δανειστέον’ τὰ δὲ μέγιστα πόλεων μαντεύματα φορὰς καρπῶν πέρι καὶ βοτῶν ἐπιγονῆς καὶ σωμάτων ὑγείας...” F. Cole Babbitt trans. These were not small concerns for the individual, and crop production was still a central concern of states, but these issues were relatively mundane compared with the weighty issues previously taken to Delphi.
- 84 However, Bonnechere (2013) stresses the necessity to examine inscriptional and literary sources when examining “political” oracles. See Introduction (p. 2).
- 85 Arnush (2006), p. 108.
- 86 Pouilloux (1952), pp. 487–491.
- 87 Plut. *De def. or.* 438a–b discusses an envoy from abroad, and the case of the “priestess who died not so long ago” (ὥσπερ ἴσμεν ἐπὶ τῆς ἑναγχοῦς ἀποθανούσης Πυθίας) which suggests ‘recent’; but Plutarch goes on to explain this case is the reason for many of the sacred rites of the Pythia.
- 88 Plut. *De Pyth. or.* 404a.
- 89 Plut. *De Pyth. or.* 396c–d, “καίτοι μουσηγέτης ὁ θεός, καὶ τῆς λεγομένης λογίότητος οὐχ ἦττον αὐτῷ καλὸν ἢ τῆς περὶ μέλη καὶ ὥδας εὐφωνίας μετεῖναι, καὶ πολὺ τὸν Ἡσίοδον εὐεπεία καὶ τὸν Ὀμηρον ὑπερφθέγγεσθαι: ‘τοὺς δὲ πολλοὺς τῶν χρησμῶν ὀρώμεν καὶ τοῖς μέτροις καὶ τοῖς ὀνόμασι πλημμελείας καὶ φανυλότητος ἀναπεπλησμένους.’”
- 90 Plut. *De Pyth. or.* 397b–c, “κἄν ἢ φανυλότερα τῶν Ὀμήρου ταῦτα τὰ ἔπη, μὴ νομίζομεν αὐτὰ πεποιηκέναι τὸν θεόν, ἀλλ’ ἐκείνου τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς κινήσεως ἐνδιδόντος, ὥς ἐκάστη ἐφύκε κινεῖσθαι τῶν προφητιδῶν.”
- 91 Plut. *De Pyth. or.* 404a–b, see also 397c.
- 92 Flacelière (1937), pp. 19–20. Also Rollins (1975), p. 103. The narrator, Phillinos, represents to a lesser degree the view of Plutarch.
- 93 Plut. *De Pyth. or.* 406b, “οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τῆς προνοίας σκοποῦντες, ὁψόμεθα πρὸς τὸ βέλτιον γεγεννημένην τὴν μεταβολήν.”
- 94 Plut. *De Pyth. or.* 402f–403a.
- 95 Lewis (2004), p. 148.
- 96 Plut. *De Pyth. or.* 403a, “πραγμάτων οὐ τῶν τυχόντων.”
- 97 Plut. *De Pyth. or.* 407c, “ἐξέπεσε τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ τοῦ τρίποδος.”
- 98 Plut. *De Pyth. or.* 407d, “οὐ γὰρ ὁ δεῖνα μὰ Δία κατέβαινε περὶ ὧν ἀνδραπόδου χρησόμενος οὐδ’ ὁ, δεῖνα περὶ ἐργασίας.”
- 99 Plut. *De Pyth. or.* 407d, “οὓς ἀνιᾶν καὶ παροξύνειν ἀπερχεῖα πολλὰ τῶν ἀβουλήτων ἀκούοντας οὐκ ἔλυσιτέλει τοῖς περὶ τὸ χρηστήριον.”
- 100 Havelock (1963), p. 137, argues that Greece was a society largely dependent on oral communication until the fourth century BC.
- 101 Plut. *De Pyth. or.* 408c.
- 102 Plut. *De Pyth. or.* 409b–c, “ἡμῖν δὲ λαμπρότερα καὶ κρείττονα καὶ σαφέστερα σημεῖα τούτων ἀναδίδωσιν, ὥσπερ ἐξ αὐχμοῦ τῆς πρόσθεν ἐρημίας καὶ πενίας εὐπορίαν καὶ λαμπρότητα καὶ τιμὴν πεποιηκώς... φιλῶ δὲ τὸν καθηγεμόνα ταύτης τῆς πολιτείας γενόμενον ἡμῖν καὶ τὰ πλεῖστα τούτων ἐκφροντίζοντα καὶ παρασκευάζοντα” There is a lacuna in the manuscript, but the sense of the passage is still clear. Stadter (2014), p. 78 n. 38, notes that the lacuna allows for about 25 letters, enough room for a name although it remains uncertain. The identification of τὸν καθηγεμόνα, who played a key role in the revival of Delphi, has spurred debate; possible suggestions include Domitian, see Weir (2004), esp. p. 163; Hadrian, see Flacelière (1971), pp. 168–85 and P&W, p. 284; and Plutarch, see Levin (1989): p. 1606. Other instances of καθηγεμών in Plutarch’s writings seem to be associated with divinity. In the *Alexander*, Plutarch refers to an oracle concerning Alexander and a wolf, saying that the *lykos* in the prophecy would be

- a καθηγεμών for Alexander. Earlier, the Lycian was called a “guide” (ἡγεμών); the term καθηγεμών, however, is often associated with deities; see Swain (1991).
- 103 Plut. *De Pyth.* or. 409a, “ὁρᾶτε δήπουθεν αὐτοὶ πολλὰ μὲν ἐπεκτισμένα τῶν πρό-
τερον οὐκ ὄντων, πολλὰ δ’ ἀνειλημμένα τῶν συγκεχυμένων καὶ διεφθαρμένων.”
- 104 Stadter (2002), pp. 25–26. The inscriptional records for the fountain, *SIG*³ 813C. For the identification of the fountain as Cassotis, see Pomtow (1924) and Vatin (1962). For the house of the Pythia, see *SIG*³ 823A–C; and for the mysterious building, see Lefèvre (2002).
- 105 McNerney (2002) notes that Pausanias (10.11.1) also gives the impression of a much more desolate sanctuary than what is gathered from the archaeological record. Perhaps the role of social memory contributed to this portrayal.
- 106 See Homolle (1896), pp. 702–732, Weir (2004), p. 163; Flacelière (1971), pp. 168–185; Levin (1989), p. 1606.
- 107 Roux (1979), pp. 89–92 describes how the Amphictyony acted as a liaison between the eight *prytaneis*, the annually elected officials in charge of Apollo’s sanctuary, and the *polis* of Delphi. Thus, the two arms have distinct roles. The oracle, too, can be counted as a separate, yet essential aspect of Delphic operations.
- 108 Athanassiadi (1989), p. 271. She goes on to note that, “On the whole ‘affluence, splendour and honour’ had succeeded the prophetic drought, of which Plutarch had complained when he had assumed his priestly duties, probably under Domitian.”
- 109 Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 2.3.
- 110 Willers (1989), p. 9.
- 111 McNerney (2002), p. 48.
- 112 Plut. *De Pyth.* or. 398a, “Ἀριστοτέλης μὲν οὖν μόνον Ὅμηρον ἔλεγε κινούμενα ποιεῖν ὀνόματα διὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν ἐγὼ δὲ φαίην ἄν καὶ τῶν ἀναθημάτων τὰ ἐνταυθοῖ μάλιστα συγκινεῖσθαι καὶ συνεπισημαίνειν τῇ τοῦ θεοῦ προνοίᾳ: καὶ τούτων μέρος μηδὲν εἶναι κενὸν μηδ’ ἀναίσθητον, ἀλλὰ πεπλησθαι πάντα θεϊότητος.”
- 113 *FD* 111.4.120, see also Weir (2004), p. 92.
- 114 For the war with Mithridates, see Plut. *Sull.* 12.5–8; 19.6. See also Levin (1989), p. 1603. P&W date the destruction to 85–84 BC.
- 115 Plut. *Ant.* 23.
- 116 Strabo 9.3.4, “ὀλιγώρηται δ’ ἱκανῶς καὶ τὸ ἱερόν, πρότερον δ’ ὑπερβαλλόντως ἐτιμήθη. δηλοῦσι δ’ οἱ τε θησαυροὶ οὓς καὶ δῆμοι καὶ δυνάσται κατεσκεύασαν, εἰς οὓς καὶ χρήματα ἀνέτιθεντο καθιερωμένα καὶ ἔργα τῶν ἀρίστων δημιουργῶν, καὶ ὁ ἄγων ὁ Πυθικὸς καὶ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ἱστορουμένων χρησμών.” H.L. Jones trans.
- 117 *SIG*³ 821a. See also Weir (2004), p. 92–93. Once the temple was rebuilt by Domitian, a Latin inscription was placed in the temple of Apollo announcing Antony’s failure at restoration. See *SIG*³ 821A.
- 118 Suet. *Dom.* 23. On *damnatio memoriae*, see Flower (2006).
- 119 Jannoray (1945), p. 82. See also *SIG*³ 821C–E.
- 120 Millar (1977), pp. 450–451.
- 121 Plassart (1970) and Flacelière (1971).
- 122 For the Delphian statue honoring Hadrian, *Syll*³, 829B; for the statue honoring Hadrian by the Amphictyony, see *Syll*³, 829A. Flacelière (1971), p. 169, dates both statues to c. AD 118.
- 123 Weir (2004), p. 104.
- 124 P&W 465. See also *Anthologia Palatina* 14.102.
- 125 P&W 462, 464, 465, 466.
- 126 Homolle (1896), pp. 705–706.
- 127 Flacelière (1943), p. 72. See also Soury (1942).

- 128 Ogilvie (1967), p. 109. He argues that there must be a difference in dramatic date of about seven years between *De def. or.*, *De Pyth. or.*, and *De E* because Plutarch's son and his son's friend are grown men in the latter two. See also Jones (1966), pp. 61–74; although he does not consider *De Defectu Oraculorum*. Flacelière (1943), pp. 72–111 claims that *De Pyth. or.* was composed much later because of a different inspiration theory, which suggests a development in his personal philosophy. In any case, these rough parameters will suffice.
- 129 Plut. *De Pyth. or.* 409c, “ἐν ὀλίγῳ χρόνῳ γενέσθαι...”
- 130 Pomtow (1921), p. 587 argues that the dramatic date was based on Demetrius' visit to Delphi, which could only have been during Agricola's governorship of Britain (AD 78–84), concluding that setting was in AD 83; Ogilvie (1967), pp. 114–115 agrees, but offers outside possibilities of AD 87 and 79, yet notes these dates are far less likely. However, Bayet (1946), p. 53 argues that the setting was in c. AD 63, but this date is contested by most scholars. Still, Flacelière (1947) claims that no dramatic date can be secured based on the internal evidence of the essay.

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3 Delphi: sacred space and cultural memory

Πυθῶνον δ' οὐκ ἔστιν ἀναρρῶσαι λάλον ὁμήν·
ἤδη γὰρ δολιχοῖσιν ἀμαυρωθεῖσα χρόνοισι
βέβληται κληῖδας ἀμαντεύτοιο σιωπῆς.
ῥέξατε δ' ὥς ἔθος ἐστὶ θεόπροπα θύματα Φοῖβῳ.¹

Nothing can restore the divine Pythian voice:
Weakened by long ages, it has placed
The keys of silence on the oracle.
Yet still bring your due offerings to Phoebus.

This fragment from Porphyry, in which Apollo gave the following response to the Nicaeans, reflects the notion of a flourishing sanctuary alongside a declining oracle. Although Porphyry is writing later than Plutarch, the sentiment seems to reinforce the representation of Delphi seen from Plutarch's Pythian Dialogues. The change in oracular practice, and particularly the decrease in oracular frequency, does not mean that the sanctuary is ignored and honor to the god abandoned. Considering the perceived change in Delphic oracular operation during the second century, other factors had to contribute to this prosperous sanctuary. It was the adornment and dedicatory homage paid at the sanctuary, through the Pythian Games and the day-to-day operations, that sustained Delphi's reputation. Since the sanctuary was open year-round for visitors, it is these daily activities which drew in pilgrims and treasures to the sanctuary. Here the spatial aspect of Delphic operations from the second through sixth century AD will be examined. Through authors such as Pausanias and Strabo and the archeological remains, a conception of Delphi as a flourishing site, distinct from the oracle, will be revealed.

The separation of the sanctuary and the oracle

Plutarch's account of Delphi can be best understood if there is a distinction between the oracle and the sanctuary. Sanctuaries themselves have always been far more dynamic than merely the site of an oracle or a temple. As Marinatos says, "sanctuaries were multidimensional institutions which served the needs of

their communities and the needs of the Greek city-state as a whole.”² This characterizes Delphi’s capacity for different types of religious worship taking place at the center, as well as services on social, political, and legislative levels. It was Delphi in this broader sense that experienced a revival in the second century AD rather than the oracle, which shows little increase in the extant record in the same period.

Although the oracle was an integral aspect of the sanctuary, it was quite distinct from the everyday operations of the shrine. The oracle was only in operation on a single day per month, limiting access to Apollo’s divine insight.³ In fact, Plutarch explains that only recently have monthly oracles been given out to inquirers; formerly, the priestess would give responses only once a year, on the seventh of the month Bysios, Apollo’s birthday.⁴ So, originally, the Delphic oracle could only be consulted once a year and, “recently” for Plutarch, only once a month as he tells us that the god is incarnated “once every month in a mortal body.”⁵ This does not, however, include the three winter months in which Apollo was absent from his temple visiting the Hyperboreans of the north. As Parke has noted, the first year in which there is evidence of several consultations in a single year is 480 BC.⁶ This indicates that, at most, the oracle was traditionally consulted a dozen or so times a year, or maybe less after this date, so perhaps the change to monthly consultation was not as recently as Plutarch would lead us to assume. Although this seemingly sparse activity gained immense popularity, the day-to-day operations of the sanctuary would have been equally essential and, perhaps, largely contributed to the revival of the sanctuary.

Delphi also was a warehouse of Greek collective cultural memory. This function, as the preserver and disseminator of Greek memory, perpetuated Delphi’s prestige and popularity. The oracle certainly helped to achieve these ends, but by the first and second centuries AD, Delphi’s role as a cultural memory bank was established, and thus continued to thrive. As Ricoeur has demonstrated, individual memory cannot exist without a collective memory to guide it, and so Delphi’s Panhellenic status allowed for the memory of collective *polis* identity and memory to enable the tradition of individual *poleis* to continue.⁷ The collective memory of the Greeks on a political, religious, and cultural landscape is demonstrated by the use of sacred and profane space at the sanctuary itself. The sanctuary operated on a variety of levels which can be demonstrated by the literary and material history of the site. The oracle itself may not have been functioning in the second century AD as it had done in the fifth century BC, but the sanctuary continued to develop and operate in several capacities throughout Delphi’s long history.

Spatial distinction

Much scholarship concerns spatial development at Delphi as well as other sanctuaries in the Greek world. Space in antiquity can be categorized as individual structures (micro level) such as, in the words of Clark, “natural shelters,

rooms, houses, graves, granaries, or shrines;" the wider landscape as a whole (macro level); as well as the varying degrees in between.⁸ For our assessment of Delphi, the essential aspect is not necessarily how the space developed, but that aspects of religious space varied. In this sense, it is essential to consider the micro and semi-micro levels of resolution of spatial archeology. The different uses of particular buildings (such as the temple of Apollo, the theater, the individual houses, and the stadium) demonstrate the capacity of Delphi to operate on distinct, yet connected, levels of activity. This provides a scope through which to view the seemingly inconsistent decline and revival of Delphi.

With year-round, and potentially daily, visits to Delphi, as will be shown below from the various festivals held, the treasuries could be adorned and Apollo honored with frequent dedications. This gave the oracle the potential to become a secondary function of the site while the sanctuary continued to thrive. Strabo, writing at the end of first century BC, reports a similar trend at Olympia:

At the outset the temple got fame on account of the oracle of the Olympian Zeus; and yet, after the oracle failed to respond, the glory of the temple persisted none the less, and it received all that increase of fame of which we know, on account both of the festal assembly and of the Olympian Games...⁹

I argue that this is the same fate suffered by Delphi – the oracle began to diminish while the sanctuary continued to flourish. Several factors contribute to this trend, including Panhellenic administration, a variety of religious festivals, and the Pythian Games. In contrast, however, to Olympia, Delphi's topography makes a clear break between cultic and athletic activities at the sanctuary difficult. Starting in the fifth century BC, Olympia's use of space in the *temenos*, or sacred enclosure, began to separate venues of athletic competition from cultic venues. At Olympia, "although, in principle, the stadium remained within the *altis*, and was connected to the sanctuary proper by means of a barrel-vaulted tunnel...effectively athletics and acts of sacrifice had been separated off from one another."¹⁰ At Delphi, by contrast, the athletic and cultic aspects of the sanctuary were not separated and much of this has to do with the layout of the sanctuary itself – Delphi is situated among steep mountains rendering it unlikely that much of the Pythian Games would have been held within the *temenos* of Apollo. However, aspects of the Games and other features of religious and cultic activity permeate the sanctuary. The multifaceted use of sacred space at Delphi lends understanding to the contradictory picture presented by Plutarch. Indeed, the sheer topography of Delphi required there to be separate areas for specific functions. The Games, the oracle, other shrines, and political governance were separated in purpose as well as geographical space. This allows for the seemingly contradictory trend at Delphi; the oracle, set apart from other features of the sanctuary, could lose significance over time, as other aspects of the sanctuary continued unabated.

The sanctuary at Delphi

The perception of the sanctuary at Delphi is dominated by the natural landscape. Settled amongst Mount Parnassos, visitors could see the Crissean plain below. The natural beauty of the site makes an obvious choice for a religious sanctuary. To add to the viability of prophecy at Delphi, the Castalian spring just east of Apollo's precinct provides a natural water source for visitor purification. Springs had long been associated with prophecy in the Greek world, and the existence of one at Delphi enhances the prophetic capacity of the site. The natural aspects of the site provide both a functional and aesthetic element to the sanctuary and prophecy.

After the arduous climb up Parnassos, visitors would enter the *temenos* of Apollo from the southeast and proceed up the hill along the Sacred Way.¹¹ Nowadays, the first encounter is the so-called Roman Agora – a large rectangular slab with Ionic porticoes lining three sides. This is considered an open-air market of sorts where visitors could buy votives, presumably as dedications to Apollo. This area was built during the Roman period, and was not mentioned by Pausanias. Instead, Pausanias simply mentions that “when you enter the city you see temples in a row. The first of them was in ruins, and the one next to it had neither images nor statues. The third had statues of a few Roman emperors; the fourth is called the temple of Athena Forethought.”¹² Modern archeologists have identified the two ruins which Pausanias encountered as the base of the bull of Corcyra and the base of the Arcadians. It is noteworthy to point out that the sanctuary's landscape would have changed drastically over the centuries, and it is arguable that the state of the site would reflect the concerns and interests of the day.

One of the enduring functions of Delphi was a neutral space in which all Greeks could display their spirit of competition and publicize the achievement of one's own *polis*. For example, the Spartans dedicated a monument commemorating their victory at Aegospotami in 405 BC. This was to remind all who visited Delphi of their success at sea. Additionally, space was made available for one *polis* to humiliate their fellow Greek rivals, as can be seen by the Arcadian monument built to commemorate their victory over the Spartans in 369 BC. In a deliberate and obvious move, the Arcadians set up their monument directly across from the Spartan dedication, as if to demonstrate their superiority in battle as well as conspicuous consumption. Delphi, as a neutral, “Panhellenic” site, provided the forum for all *poleis* to compete physically and materially.

A good portion of the Sacred Way is dedicated to inter-*polis* competition. Treasuries belonging to several *poleis* would be seen further along the Sacred Way on the left. The first to be encountered was from the city of Sicyon and was built in the late sixth century BC, while the city was under the rule of the tyrant Cleisthenes. Following Neer, “the purpose of a treasury is not just to store votives but to *nationalize* them, and with them a dedicant's privileged relationship to the gods.”¹³ In this way, the treasuries become a political

statement of wealth and competitive consumption. The material wealth of individual cities would be displayed in the *cella*, and the architectural accomplishments could be seen from the path. For example, metopes on the Athenian treasury depict the exploits of Heracles and Theseus, which demonstrate even the mythological supremacy of Athens. Dozens of inscriptions on the Athenian treasury also record Athenian victories in the Pythian Games, as discussed below. The function as a central treasury, boasting Greek neutrality and unity, would have also increased the wealth of Apollo and Delphi, lending weight to Delphi's significance.

Past the next treasury, that of the Knidians, is the *bouleuterion* where the Amphictyony met, situated within the fray of material competition and display of the treasuries. Next, visitors would see the Rock of the Sibyl and the Naxian Sphinx, both having mythological ties to Delphi. The Rock of the Sibyl is the rock from which the Sibyl gave oracles, and clearly leads up to Apollo's temple where the Pythia gave her own prophecies. It serves almost as an appetizer for visitors who are preparing for the main dish – Apollo's temple. Before making their way to the temple of Apollo, visitors first reach the Halos where the festival of the Septerion was held every eight years.¹⁴ A young boy would set fire to a wooden representation of the mythological Python's palace to commemorate Apollo's slaying of the she-dragon.¹⁵ The Septerion was one of the many extra-oracular festivals on the calendar at Delphi, as we shall see.

As visitors continue along the Sacred Way, at the base of Apollo's temple is the Stoa of the Athenians. This stoa was constructed after the Athenian victory over the Persians, and its place of prominence was likely due to their significant efforts at Marathon and Salamis. The victory at battle secured them a place of victory among the sacred enclosure. Directly behind the Athenian Stoa is the polygonal wall, which has a great many slave manumission inscriptions as discussed below. Other spatial elements that have pride of place include several votives placed at the east end of Apollo's temple – the pillar of Prusias II, the pillar of Eumenes II of Pergamon, and the victory monument set up by Aemilius Paulus after his defeat of Perseus at Pydna. Each of these monuments recalls the great deeds by Hellenistic leaders, who situate themselves at the very center of material competition at Delphi.

Finally, directly in front of Apollo's temple is the Chian altar of Apollo, built and financed by the island of Chios. This replaced the earlier, Alcmaeonid altar and probably dates to the third century BC when Chios joined the Amphictyony.¹⁶ Again, the role within Delphi, or Greek society at large, is manifest in the supremacy of place in the sanctuary of Apollo. Thus far, different types of places – political, material, individual, state-sanctioned, and religious – have all coexisted easily within Apollo's precinct. Above all, however, looms Apollo's sacred temple. Apollo's temple itself is not as extraordinary as one may expect from one of the most sacred and popular temples in Greece. After the original mythological temples at Delphi, made of laurel, beeswax, and feathers, a stone temple was built.¹⁷ In the fourth century BC, when the temple needed to be rebuilt, it was a clear copy of the original Archaic stone temple.¹⁸ No efforts

were made to embellish the original, more modest temple. So although the temple was the center of Apollo's sanctuary, it was by no means excessively elaborate.

Apollo's temple is certainly the focal point of the entire sanctuary, and the culmination of the Sacred Way. The significance of the temple in terms of oracular consultation was addressed in Chapter 1. A set of stairs leads visitors up from the temple to the theater, built in the fourth century BC. This feature, northwest of the temple, provides yet another layer of activity at the site. The theater would be used for choral and musical competitions during the Pythian Games. It is perhaps likely, too, that theatrical performances were held here, as Dionysus also was worshipped at the shrine. However, there is no firm evidence for this. Another feature of the sanctuary was added rather late, and that is the stadium which was built in the second century AD. The stadium was obviously crucial to the athletic competitions of the Pythian Games, and will be discussed below.

The layout of Apollo's *temenos* clearly demonstrates the multi-faceted nature of Delphi. In addition to oracular consultation, the sanctuary served a variety of other functions. One of the common themes surrounding the use of the sacred space was competition, a vivid demonstration of the agonistic culture found throughout Greece. The stadium was used for physical competition during the *agon* of the Pythian Games where Greeks could compete for "undying glory."¹⁹ This form of competition is quintessential to Greek identity and is seen through the *periodos* of the Olympian, Pythian, Nemean, and Isthmian Games. At Delphi, the Panhellenic nature of the sanctuary provides a venue for this physical competition.

Additionally, competition through material consumption is essential to the Delphic sanctuary and Greek identity. The notion of competition through wealth and material goods can be traced back to Hesiod who tells us that there are two different kinds of Strife (*Ερίδων*), one which leads to malicious jealousy and war, and the other:

...stirs up even the shiftless to toil; for a man grows eager to work when he considers his neighbor, a rich man who hastens to plough and plant and put his house in good order; and neighbor vies with his neighbor as he hurries after wealth. This Strife is wholesome for men.²⁰

In this sense, the treasuries at Delphi serve as another form of healthy competition among all Greeks. They afford an outlet for *poleis* to display their wealth and remind visitors of their success in battle and their devotion to the gods. Even new architectural genres and forms of buildings could function as competition. Each *polis* would then want to build, dedicate, and honor Apollo in a way that would trump their neighbors and fellow Greeks. Delphi was far more than a mere oracular center; it was an avenue for competition among all Greek city-states, a key aspect of Greek culture.

In addition to the main *temenos* of Apollo, another major sanctuary to Athena Pronaia lies further down the hill from the Sacred Way. Additionally, two

treasuries are housed in Athena's sanctuary, one from as far away as Massalia. However, the main attraction in this area is the Temple of Athena and the Tholos, both built in the fourth century BC. Finally, athletic areas are found within Athena's sanctuary as well – the gymnasium, the *palaistra*, and a bath house – all providing a space for athletic training and competition. Like the *temenos* of Apollo, the sanctuary to Athena also functions on multiple levels of religious worship and competition.

Delphic administration

When assessing Delphic operations and the status of the sanctuary, the *polis* of Delphi itself must also be considered because their fortunes are inextricably intertwined. Sadly, there is far less information regarding Delphi the *polis* than there is concerning the sanctuary. Archeologists have excavated and restored the sanctuary, but not the town. The earliest attestation of the *polis* of Delphi (as opposed to the oracle) comes from Herodotus.²¹ He refers to inhabitants of the town of Delphi – men, women, and children. That Delphi was an independent *polis*, not simply an oracular center, is also demonstrated by the fact that, “Delphi issued decrees, awarded grants of citizenship, and had a place in such political structures as a *boulē* and *ekklēsia*, all suggesting that Delphi was indeed a *polis*.”²² The *polis* of Delphi was largely responsible for the maintenance of the sanctuary, even though several Greek *poleis* adorned the site, much like Elis at Olympia.²³

Although Delphi was initially under the management of the local community, the sanctuary came under the control of the Amphictyony during the seventh century BC.²⁴ Rather than members of the *polis*, the Amphictyony was comprised of *ethnē*, “the Thessalians, Boeotians (not the Thebans only), Dorians, Ionians, Perrhaebi, Magnes, Dolopians, Locrians, Oetaeans, Phthiotians, Malians, and Phocians.”²⁵ Two sacred ambassadors, called *hieromnemes*, were sent to Delphi twice a year as representatives of each *ethnē*. The job of the *hieromnemes* was to oversee sanctuary administration and the Pythian Games. This placed Delphi in a unique position among other Greek *poleis* – the sanctuary and the *polis* exercised a degree of autonomy not found among other league members throughout Greece. The Amphictyony originally exercised authority over the religious aspect of Delphi, particularly the *temenos*, but eventually it came to be an arbiter of inter-*polis* politics. By the seventh century BC, the Amphictyony had developed from a quasi-local entity into a Panhellenic political body. It frequently intervened in political affairs – so not only was the oracle influencing the Greek political climate, but the Amphictyony played a role as well.²⁶

A significant role of the Amphictyony involved sacred and oracular rule, by proxy, but seems to be more concerned with sacred law and finances of the sanctuary. Many of the cases brought before the council had to do with the sacred possessions at Delphi, including sacred land, votives, inscriptions, and the governance of festivals, but also it seems the Amphictyony acted as a court

for inter-*poleis* arbitration.²⁷ It does not seem that a primary function of the Amphictyony involved the running of oracular procedure, and rarely did it intervene with the *polis* of Delphi itself.²⁸ Perhaps the separation between the oracle and the sanctuary stems partly from the administration of the *temenos*. John Davies characterizes the arrangement whereby the *polis* of Delphi and the Amphictyony managed the affairs of the greater sanctuary as “bifocal.”²⁹ The Delphic *polis* seems to be more engaged with the oracle than the Amphictyony; the *polis* issued decrees concerning *promanteia* which directly concerned the Pythia and her inquirers.³⁰ However, the Amphictyony was involved with the Pythian Games and protected the sanctuary during Sacred Wars. In both cases, the oracle still remains a separate entity from the rest of the activities at Delphi. Perhaps, during the second century AD, the *polis* of Delphi was weakened in a financial or political sense, which forced the citizens of Delphi to neglect aspects of oracular administration. On the other hand, the Amphictyony’s strength in numbers prevented the decline of the games and the sanctuary at large.

Festivals

As can be seen from the multiple features of sacred space at the sanctuary, Delphi had different religious activities, including various festivals, available to visitors throughout the year. These numerous sacred days and festivals, although containing a significant religious element, were distinct from the oracle.³¹ For example, several gods had a place at Delphi and were worshipped accordingly.³² The sanctuary of Athena Pronaia is a key example. Even here, there is a sanctuary of the hero Phylakos, who helped defend against the Persian invasion. From the evidence of the remaining structures it is obvious that both Apollo and Athena held a particularly esteemed place, as they each had a sanctuary devoted to them. Additionally, Ge, Poseidon, and Dionysus had portions of Apollo’s temple or parts of the sacred field within Apollo’s sanctuary.³³ Other gods – Aphrodite, Hermes and Heracles – have been mentioned in honorific dedications which attest their place at Delphi, not to mention Apollo’s insistence on a variety of gods to be worshipped from his oracles.³⁴ Finally, Pan and his consort of nymphs were worshipped in the Corycian cave, a sort of subsidiary of the Delphic sanctuary.³⁵ Thus, these deities had their own physical place of worship at Delphi. Apollo may have issued the prophecies at Delphi, but other gods coexisted there. This is not surprising, considering the Panhellenic nature of the site, which would want to emphasize all Greek gods.

Several major festivals were held at Delphi. The biggest and most famous of these were the quadrennial festivals, the Pythian Games and the Soteria. The former was established in 582 BC to celebrate the victory over Crisa in the First Sacred War, and the latter after the Aetolian victory over the Gauls in 279 BC.³⁶ Although relatively infrequent, these festivals attracted a large number of visitors to the sanctuary as did the less famous, but more frequent, festivals such as the annual Heraia, Heracleia, Dioscoureia, and Artemitia.³⁷ These festivals became an important aspect of everyday life at Delphi. Based on extensive

epigraphic and oracular evidence, it seems the most important of these annual festivals was the Theoxenia (θεοξένια).³⁸ Pindar's *Paeon* 6 is a poem composed to be performed at the festival. He writes:

For my tongue desires (to sing) a song of honey-sweet perfection now that I have come to the broad gathering of Loxias on the occasion of the guest-festival of the gods. The sacrifice is being offered on behalf of all of glorious Greece, which the tribe of the Delphians prayed (to save from) the famine...³⁹

This festival took place yearly, during the Delphic month of Theoxenios which corresponds to March–April. From the poem one can see that it was a Panhellenic festival and inscriptions testify to the involvement of several *poleis*.⁴⁰ The festival is thought to have been a large feast and was believed to be shared with the gods, either as guests or as the hosts.⁴¹ The festival begins with the chorus, which gathers at Delphi's Castalian spring, and goes on to describe several heroes and legends from Aegina: Thetis is mentioned, as well as Apollo's murder of Achilles, the capture of Troy by Neoptolemos, and his murder by Apollo at Delphi.⁴² That these are largely gods of Aegina suggests that Delphi could incorporate the legends of other *poleis*, something which, in turn, would attract various *ethnē* to visit and partake in the celebration. Alternatively, since these gods and legends are universal, despite their affinity with Aegina, it is likely that the impetus to promote them at Delphi came from the dedications made by these *poleis*. In this way, Delphi's Panhellenic nature was recognized, not only in terms of the oracle.⁴³ Other yearly festivals would have kept the sanctuary busy on a regular basis, indeed as Fontenrose has noted: "it almost seems that a Delphian could celebrate religious festivities all the year round if he had the time and inclination."⁴⁴ Although these cults and festivals did not diminish oracular visitors, they would have maintained the prestige of the sanctuary despite the oracular business of Delphi. The greatest of all Delphic festivals was in honor of Apollo Pythios and the main feature of the festival was the Pythian *agon*, or Games.

Pythian Games

The Pythian Games, celebrated every four years, significantly contributed to the fame and popularity of Delphi. Although the Games were celebrated less frequently than the oracle was consulted, the Games would have drawn larger crowds from all over the Greek world. The Pythian Games are the second oldest of the four on the Panhellenic agonistic circuit, established in 586 BC.⁴⁵ Originally, the Games were held every eight years in order to venerate Apollo's defeat of the Python, who had been the guardian of the sanctuary under Gaia.⁴⁶ Uniquely among these competitions, the Pythian Games were not athletic contests from the outset but musical and choral competitions.⁴⁷ Singing and playing the kithara became a standard event at the Games, which reflects

Apollo's influence over the sphere of music and his depictions with the lyre. Overtime, new events were added, such as theatrical troupes and other artistic competitions.⁴⁸

The historical Games began in 582 BC, after the victory over Crisa in the First Sacred War. They were held in the valley below Parnassus with some frequency until the end of antiquity. The winners of the first festival Games were awarded prizes of great value, such as a golden tripod. However, in 582 BC, the Games were made *agon stephanites* (στεφανίται ἀγῶνες), meaning the prize was a garland crown of laurel leaves – modeled on the olive wreath prize awarded to Olympian victors. Above all the games were intended to honor the gods. The events also developed over time, and new events were added “reflecting the proclivities of successive periods.”⁴⁹ Some of the more recently added competitions were unique to Delphi and demonstrate both the sphere of Apollo's influence, and also the dynamic, varied nature of the sanctuary itself. For example, in the 23rd Pythiad, the hoplite race was introduced, and in the 48th, a two-horse chariot race was added.⁵⁰

Beginning with Aetolian hegemony over Delphi in the 270s BC after their help with expelling the Gauls, the venue for the Pythian Games was moved from the valley of the coastal plain uphill to Delphi. This reorganization continued in the AD 170s. The stadium at Delphi, located at the highest point of Delphi, was built by Herodes Atticus, who donated a considerable amount of money. This benefaction also helped to construct other buildings at Delphi such as the so-called Roman baths.⁵¹ There is a steady increase of Pythian Games victor inscriptions from AD 180–217, probably resulting from the construction of the new stadium. Now that the Games were celebrated higher up on the slope of Parnassus, rather than the plains below, the Games became more intimately tied to the sanctuary because of the proximity of the competitions to the *temenos*. This allowed for the Games to add considerably to the prosperity of Delphi, and indeed it was the popularity of the Games that contributed to the fame and prestige of the sanctuary in the first centuries of the Common Era.

Around AD 200 the Pythian Games began to be exported throughout the eastern provinces with imperial sanction. Weir notes that: “nineteen different cities in Thrace, Asia Minor and the Near East minted explicitly Pythian coins; another eight [cities] have only the attestation of inscription.”⁵² The imitation of Pythian Games (*Isopythian*) is attested by 33 coins (*Isoolympian* coins amount to 38). The major difference was that the Games of Asia Minor were *oikoumenikoi*, or worldwide Games in which participation was not restricted to just the Greeks, thus expanding the pool of participants and popularity.⁵³ This demonstrates Delphi's ability to expand in terms of reputation and influence, but a popularity influenced greatly by the Games, rather than the oracle. Additionally, it was during the Games, not the auspicious days for oracular consultation, that Delphi witnessed the greatest ebb and flow of visitors, as in the case of Olympia. Indeed, Eusebius says that during his day the Games still attracted philosophers, attesting to the continued draw to the sanctuary for

reasons not necessarily oracular.⁵⁴ The cities in Asia Minor had to appeal to the emperor to call their games “Pythian” and Delphi only had to give their consent to the emperor’s ruling.⁵⁵ The role of the emperor in the exportation of the Games demonstrates the lack of autonomy held by Delphi during this time – Rome dominated decisions about the sanctuary. The emperors, most notably Nero, also became active participants in the Games as a result of their philhellenism – a trait common in the Roman elite.⁵⁶ Delphi was a useful political tool to legitimize Roman rule in the Hellenized east, and became a popular site for Roman patronage.⁵⁷ By the second century AD, the quintessential aspect of Hellenistic culture to be exported and emulated was the agonistic festival of the Pythiad. It was through this physical competition that Greeks throughout the Mediterranean could connect to the centrality that is Delphi. The role of the oracle, which had been so essential for connecting colonists in earlier centuries, was now eclipsed by the Games in terms of Greek society and culture.

Pilgrims, visitors, and dedications

It is clear, then, that the day-to-day business of the sanctuary was a very important aspect in maintaining Delphi’s prestige throughout the centuries. Many inscriptions at the site concern honors paid to local magistrates, emperors, distinguished foreigners, and Pythian victors.⁵⁸ Other inscriptions demonstrate the general management of the sanctuary. Perhaps most interesting are the numerous inscriptions recording manumissions of slaves at Delphi beginning around 200 BC, and increasing in the second century AD. Over one thousand manumissions are recorded on the lower wall of the temple at Delphi, the majority of them are for female slaves. This is an attestation of the popularity of the business.⁵⁹ It seems that the sanctuary significantly increased its revenue through this lucrative endeavor; Delphi would have received commission from this deed of sale and increased the number of people who visited.⁶⁰

Delphi attracted additional tourists in other ways. Many flocked to the sanctuary, which almost doubled as a museum for Greek art and history, particularly in the Roman period. This is demonstrated in Plutarch’s *De Pythiae* in which some of the interlocutors in the dialogue are late to the discussion because he had been touring the sanctuary.⁶¹ The tendency for Romans to view Greece as an historical museum can also be seen from the writing of Cicero: Lucius says of Athens, “there is no end to it in this city; wherever you go you tread historic ground.”⁶² Many of these visitors included philosophers, as Delphi had long been a center for knowledge and wisdom. Even in Plutarch’s essays, Delphi is presented as a venue for philosophical discussions and debate. Many famous philosophers are associated with Delphi, notably Socrates.

Additionally, the Delphic maxims *know thyself* and *nothing in excess*, have explicit philosophical consequences. In the Roman period, philosophers increased their interest at Delphi, and, as seen from Plutarch’s essays in Chapter 2, the sanctuary became a congregation site for philosophers and sophists. Most of the characters in his dialogues are not only visitors to Delphi, but are associated

with various philosophical schools. Delphi always had a reputation for wisdom and learning, but it seems that, during Plutarch's day, this aspect of the sanctuary solidified.⁶³

Philosophers were honored by the Amphictyony, but no evidence of this practice is found before the first century AD. Such honors included citizenship and were noted on inscriptions; for example, L. Calvenus Taurus of Berytus, who was the teacher of Aulus Gellius and a friend of Plutarch, was honored in this way.⁶⁴ Additionally, and perhaps stemming from his proposed work on the stadium at Delphi, Atticus Herodes was honored at Delphi at some time around AD 163. Neoplatonists were honored at Delphi as well: Isidore of Thmouis in Egypt is regarded as one of the earliest masters of the philosophy.⁶⁵ By the second and third centuries AD, philosophers gained religious authority and they were sanctioned by Delphi in this way.

Other visitors would often offer a dedication to the god and his sanctuary. These offerings served both as a way of thanking Apollo for his assistance in various matters, or as a preventive homage paid out of respect for the god. Many dedications were made after a successful victory in war as well as in conjunction with a favorable oracle. Dedications such as these contributed to the wealth Delphi enjoyed. Indeed, as Jacquemin has revealed in her study of offerings at Delphi, Apollo at Delphi received more offerings than any other sanctuary throughout its entire history and operation.⁶⁶ Beginning with the French excavations, a plethora of astonishing treasures were uncovered, including bronze plaques, fragments of ivory figurines, bronze statuettes, and terracotta items.⁶⁷

Herodotus records some of the most impressive dedications by great kings – Gyges offered golden bowls and silver bullion, Midas gave a golden throne, and of course, the famous dedications of King Croesus of Lydia which included gold and silver couches, goblets, purple tunics, over one hundred gold bricks, and a golden lion.⁶⁸ Although many of these dedications have been lost, many remained for archeologists to uncover, and can be found in the museum at Delphi – gold and silver statues, and smaller dedications of bronze and ivory. These demonstrate the wealth that Delphi housed in the many treasuries at the sanctuary.

The practice of dedication evolved throughout the centuries of Delphic operation. In the fifth century BC, the majority of dedications were made to thank Apollo for a certain oracle or military victory, especially the in Persian Wars. By the fourth century BC “dedications, though sometimes attached to an oracular consultation, were also set up to commemorate (and even act as our primary evidence of) a much wider array of events and entities.”⁶⁹ By the Hellenistic period, dedicatory practice at Delphi was easily able to operate independently, separate from the oracle, and thus continued unabated.

The nature of dedications changed again in the Roman period. In addition to visiting Delphi to behold the Greek antiquities, Delphi became a venue for Roman aristocrats, generals, and emperors to engage in conspicuous consumption and competition. This two-way exchange further enhanced the role

of Delphi as a place of competition and a tourist destination. Several additions to the sacred and material landscape at Delphi were added by prominent Romans in the first and second centuries AD. After his defeat of the Macedonians at Cynoscephelae and declaration of Greek *eleutheria*, Flamininus dedicated a golden wreath with an inscription glorifying Apollo's oracles. Additionally, he dedicated his silver shields to Apollo with the inscription:

O you sons of Zeus, whose joy is in swift horsemanship, O Tyndaridae, princes of Sparta, Titus, a descendant of Aeneas, has brought you a most excellent gift, he who for the sons of the Greeks wrought freedom.⁷⁰

Flamininus honors Apollo, but does so in order to honor himself. Previously, all Roman dedications at Delphi had been on behalf of the state, such as that of Fabius after the Battle of Cannae. Now, Flamininus uses Delphi as "a theatre to display and augment his own fame and to claim special closeness to the divine."⁷¹ Delphi is an essential platform for promoting Roman superiority. Aemilius Paullus continued in the same vein and sought to glorify himself at the sanctuary. After his defeat of Perseus and the Macedonians, Aemilius erected a statue of himself on the very pillar Perseus had planned to dedicate his own statue, claiming "the conquered should make room for their conquerors."⁷² Not only does this summarize the Roman conquest of Greece and the remnants of Alexander's empire, it could also be interpreted as a Roman conquest of Delphi. The Roman conquest of Delphi was most clearly achieved through the actions of Sulla, who plundered the sanctuary to fund his war with Mithridates.⁷³ The nature of the dedications changed as the powers of influence over Delphi changed as well.

Pausanias and Delphic dedications

Although dedicatory practice had always been fluid, and offerings could be made without a connection to the oracle, this practice became more frequent. In contrast to oracular consultation, dedications at Delphi do not seem to decline in number, even with the plundering of the sanctuary by Sulla and Nero, and many votives were still there to be seen by Pausanias.

In his *Periegesis*, Pausanias describes what he saw when he visited Delphi, which seems to contradict a revival during the second century AD. He wrote his extensive *logos* between the early AD 160s and 180, a time which coincides with much of the rebuilding taking place at Delphi.⁷⁴ He tells us that: "Near the votive offering of the Tarentines is a treasury of the Sicyonians, but there is no treasure to be seen either here or in any other of the treasuries."⁷⁵ This statement confuses the nature of the supposed revival at Delphi, but can be explained with the help of intratextual analysis and archeological evidence.

Pausanias followed a plan during his data collection and writing. It is clear that the books were written in order because over thirty cross references refer to passages that were yet to be written, and most are in the future tense.⁷⁶ In

some instances he may introduce a topic, but then defers it to a more relevant section of the work. Additionally, he begins with an account of Attica, in Book I, one of the most visited Greek regions, discusses Olympia at length in the very middle of the work in Books V and VI, and saves Delphi for the ultimate position in Book X. Each placement testifies to the relevance of each section, and so it can be assumed, that although he does not treat Delphi as extensively as Olympia, it still held a place of importance due to the impact of its final position.

Delphi's treatment, at a mere 27 chapters, is "short, rushed, and imprecise," particularly when matched to Olympia which takes up one and a half books.⁷⁷ Also, the region of the Delphic Amphictyony was not covered, which seems a significant oversight.⁷⁸ This has led some scholars to suggest that the entire work, as it survives, is not complete. The evidence is meagre: Stephanos of Byzantion includes one reference to Pausanias "Book XI" which suggests that perhaps a book is missing, but there is good argument against this.⁷⁹ Habicht has argued, most convincingly, that all of the cross-references refer to existing passages, which suggests that the work is complete.⁸⁰ Sidebottom argues that, based on stylistic considerations, the work comes to us in its entirety: it does not have a formal preface, like many ancient novels, and the ending of Pausanias' work, with a seemingly irrelevant passage, can be compared to the ending of Herodotus' narrative.⁸¹ The work may be complete, but Delphi is still treated somewhat hastily and this may, to some extent, account for Pausanias' brief treatment of the treasuries.

A partial explanation may also lie in the date of the treasuries he mentions. The treasury of the Sicyonians, and many others date to the sixth century BC. Between their construction and Pausanias' visit, many treasures were plundered.⁸² Perhaps Pausanias was allowing the "social memory" of Greece to explain this inconsistency for itself. His readers would have been aware of the plundering and, therefore, could understand the lack of treasures. It seems as though Pausanias is trying to remove Rome from, or prevent Rome's incorporation into, the social memory and thus preserving the greatness of the Greek past. He names 77 different dedications, and not a single one is from Rome.⁸³ All but two of the objects he describes pre-date 260 BC, demonstrating his preference for Delphi's past, rather than present.⁸⁴ Conversely, in keeping with the general trend of Book X, Pausanias may have simply omitted much of the detail of what he saw:

I shall record those of the dedications that seemed to me most memorable. I do not think it is worth worrying about athletes or obscure musicians, and I have already dealt in my account of Elis with those athletes who left any kind of glory behind them.⁸⁵

Weir has proposed several explanations which could serve to explain his omissions.⁸⁶ Perhaps he spent far less time at Delphi (as opposed to Olympia) which would have restricted his inclusions. Alternatively, local guides could have

given him a tour of what *they* thought worthy of seeing at the time, which would likely be the old, historic aspects of the sanctuary. Finally, Pausanias could have been familiar with a Hellenistic guide book before his visit; if he used that of Polemon of Ilion, it would help to explain his third century BC cutoff date of material, as Polemon flourished c. 190 BC.

Pausanias did include many bronze statues and various treasuries in his description, and, when he is not concerned with myths and stories, he describes each treasury and nearby statues as he climbs up the hill to Parnassus.⁸⁷ Pausanias also records an oracle given to Themistocles when he arrived at Delphi with spoils from the Persian War:

Do not leave the beautiful ornament
Of the spoils of the Persian in my shrine:
Send them away quickly, send them home.⁸⁸

This could reflect the cultural memory of Pausanias' readers. Indeed, Plutarch also seemed to favor Classical over contemporary structures in his writings, emphasizing the heyday rather than Roman-occupied Achaëa. The archaeological record contains hundreds of dedications made early in the second century AD, something which is not apparent from either Plutarch or Pausanias' account.⁸⁹

Throughout the first few centuries AD, dedications continued to be made at Delphi despite the diminished clientele of the oracle as described by Plutarch or the lack of treasures noted by Pausanias. Although many of the dedications at Delphi had been plundered through the centuries, many still remained to be uncovered by modern archeologists. Based on the findings of Jacquemin, who catalogued 681 extant dedications from the sanctuary at Delphi, the offerings made from the first century AD onwards still represent a significant percentage of extant findings.

Of these dedications, at least 112 can be securely placed in the first centuries AD, a number which amounts to nearly 17% of the total offerings. It may not seem like a large percentage but, when we consider that this figure represents four of the 12 centuries of cult and oracular operation at Delphi, it becomes statistically significant. It must be recalled that many of the offerings were taken by Nero and Constantine. Despite these plunderings, many offerings were preserved by the time of Pausanias' visit, but he preferred to allude to a time of Delphi's prominence instead of the sanctuary's contemporary state.

Rather than focusing on the state of Delphi as it was then, Pausanias seems to have used Book X to allude to the greatness of the Greek past. Two of the main features of Book X are the Gallic invasion, which Pausanias has been promising to cover since Book I, and the paintings of Polygnotos depicting the sack of Troy and the underworld on the *Lesche*.⁹⁰ These two features are popular images of Greek memory – the Panhellenic epic memory of Homer, as well as the more immediate memory of Greece defeating foreign invaders. Each of these episodes glorify the greatness that was Greek history. Certainly, the

Delphi Pausanias visited was not as spectacular as it had been at its zenith, even with the renovations and rebuilding, yet Pausanias wanted to remind his readers of the central role Delphi had previously played in Greek history, culture, and now memory. Pausanias' account reminds his readers that Delphi had once been great and was still considered an icon of Greek culture, but was now relatively diminished. One gathers from Pausanias the extent of the revival of Delphi – a few new buildings and various historic attractions, but the Delphi of the Classical period was now just a memory for the Greeks. It had transformed into a place to visit and reminisce about the greatness of Greek history. At the end of his account, Pausanias tells us: "That is the extent and the greatness of what there was left at Delphi in my time, what there was left for me to write about."⁹¹ The revival, although helpful for the sustainment of Delphi's prestige in the second century AD, was only treating the symptoms of decline. By AD 180, when Pausanias finished his work on Greece, the oracle had begun its final stage of decadence which was severe and final.

The end of Delphi

The revival, seen in the rebuilding and renovation of the sanctuary, in the second century AD was indeed short-lived. By the time of the Severans, the oracle is nearly silent in the literature and very little reference to oracular consultation at Delphi is extant. The beginning of the third century AD did, however, see the final recorded restoration of Apollo's temple by the proconsul Leonticus.⁹² Only a few extant oracles date from AD 200 onwards. One concerns a problem with the land and the salvation of the city: Cleitosthenes of Tralles inquired about these matters and Apollo prescribed a sacrifice to Poseidon. Delphi continued to maintain the power of the traditional gods in AD 250.⁹³ However, as is typical of the syncretistic nature of Greco-Roman religion at this time, Poseidon was to be called "Asphalios, Temenuchos, Apotropos, Hippios, Arges."⁹⁴ Fontenrose notes the quality of the verses, designating them as "miserable" and suggests that they "reveal a sad decline in the god's poetic art, in keeping with the general decline of Oracles in the third century."⁹⁵ Fontenrose casts doubt on many of the late oracles from the Delphic corpus, but interestingly not due to his authentic parameters, which determine whether an oracle is historical or not, rather suggesting that these are authentic oracles but not from Delphi. He offers the possibility that many of these oracles originated from Asia Minor. It is curious that many of the later oracles may have indeed come from Asia rather than Delphi, perhaps lending weight to a significant decline after the second century AD, and the continued oracular business of the oracles of Asia Minor, which will be addressed in Chapters 4 and 5. Two other oracles were given in the third and fourth centuries AD. Both are perhaps given to philosophers, one in AD 228, and another supposedly issued from Delphi in AD 262 to Amelios the Neoplatonist.⁹⁶ In AD 300 more philosophers were included within Delphic responses, which show the success of their teachings and ideas.⁹⁷

Although there is still evidence for Delphic consultations during these centuries, they are few and far between. The only good evidence for Delphi in the third through sixth centuries are honorific inscriptions, brief mentions in the literature, and archeological remains.⁹⁸ Indeed, a shift in emphasis is seen through inscriptional evidence which shows the focus was moved from the oracle to the town in the last quarter of the third century AD; Delphi's oracle was no longer its main attraction.⁹⁹ One of the final extant oracles, as mentioned at the beginning of Chapter 1, was given in AD 362/3 to Emperor Julian's envoys. The emperor Julian expressed his dismay at the waning of Delphi and exempted the people of Delphi from imperial taxation.¹⁰⁰ It appears that Julian may have also restored the temple after a fire in the third century, which demonstrates not only his dedication to the Pythian Apollo, but also the continued building effort at the site.¹⁰¹

Only a few oracles are extant from the fourth century AD, yet while the oracular tradition continues to diminish at Delphi, the sanctuary continued to see much rebuilding, dedication, and new construction at the site. During this time, the so-called Roman Agora was built outside the sanctuary, as well as several new dedications of emperors in the form of statues. Indeed, these imperial dedications postdate the final recorded oracle from the site.¹⁰² This suggests that the cultural memory and sacred space at Delphi persisted after the practice of oracular consultation. Although many oracles could have been recorded and perished in the millennia since their query, those consultations deemed important were more likely to survive. Less significant oracles would not be preserved and were thus forgotten.

Many emperors of the Late Antique period were honored at Delphi. This demonstrates a continued propensity for Greeks and non-Greeks to dedicate at Delphi, even though the oracle was not consulted as frequently as it had been in the past. Even Constantine, despite his theft of significant symbols of Apollo's power, sought to enforce his authority over traditional religion and the traditional gods themselves.¹⁰³ This symbolic significance is an indication of the importance of dedications, and their respected place at Delphi. Constantine was honored twice at Delphi, which was still by that time a *ιερά πόλις*, a sacred city, and was revered and honored as a sacred site.¹⁰⁴ The last extant honors are those to the emperors Valens and Valentinian between AD 364 and 371.¹⁰⁵ The sanctuary still offered ample reasons for dedication and honor; the Pythian Games continued to be conducted and the oracle likely consulted (albeit infrequently) until the final closing of the sanctuary. In AD 391, Theodosius issued an edict demanding the abolishment of oracles, the ban on celebration of festivals and the closure of all pagan sanctuaries. Delphi's decline was over, the oracle was finally silenced.

Still, the continued dedicatory practices at Delphi during this period reflect the nature of the revival in the second century AD; the oracle diminished while the sanctuary continued. As Athanassiadi has noted: "At Delphi, then, civic munificence seems to have followed a reverse course to the fate of the oracle..."¹⁰⁶ This was the same fate suffered by Olympia – the oracle declined

while the Games persisted. Likewise, Delphi's oracular practice became less of a concern to visitors and patrons as the Pythian Games, philosophical reputation, and Greek cultural memory. Delphi became, in a sense, a living museum which would allow for the celebration of Greece's cultural heritage and a place for Roman emperors to display their philhellenism and reinforce their legitimacy. The sanctuary remained a cultural icon, even throughout the early Christian period.

Delphi continued to operate as a religious sanctuary well into the sixth century AD. There are no extant oracular pronouncements, and very little epigraphical evidence from this period. However, architectural evidence gives some glimpse into the last centuries of the sanctuary. Still, the transition from the Panhellenic site to a Christian-occupied religious site is underrepresented in both the literary and archeological record, leaving an incomplete picture. Even Christian iconography and archeology are sparse at the site. One aspect does seem clear – Apollo's temple was never converted into a Christian church and does not seem to have suffered any deliberate damage. It seems as though the transition into the Christian era was peaceful, and there was a continuity of pagan worship continued throughout the third through sixth centuries.

Delphi eventually made room for three Christian basilicas within the sanctuary's sacred space. Yet contrary to what one may imagine, it seems there was little competition over the use of sacred space between the pagan sanctuary and Christian newcomers. Still, the known location of two of the Christian basilicas were at the main entrances of Delphi which would make them the first buildings one would encounter upon visiting.¹⁰⁷ The third church's exact location is unknown, but could have been located within the *temenos* itself, and perhaps even just above Apollo's temple. This location remains speculative, and if that terrace was the location, it is probably due to the fact that the area was already primed and developed, rather than a symbolic dominance over Apollo's temple.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, pragmatism dominates over religious reasons in regards to the location of the Christian buildings at Delphi.¹⁰⁹ Support of this view comes from the fact that the basilicas were all new constructions, rather than built through the appropriation of other religious building materials. A violent takeover of the sanctuary is not seen at Delphi, but the transformation into the Christian era was more gradual – sacred buildings were progressively transformed for profane uses. The only Christian inscriptions at Delphi are the cross graffiti on the Altar of the Chians and the tombstone of a Deaconess Athanasia.¹¹⁰ Delphi seems to have gradually, and relatively peacefully, made a transition into a Christian community from the fourth century AD onwards. By the sixth century AD, Apollo's temple was destroyed for a final time, probably by fire. Its collapse obstructed the Sacred Way which blocked off much of the upper section of the sanctuary, indicating that this area was abandoned from this time.¹¹¹ The oracle had ceased and interest in maintaining the sanctuary died out shortly thereafter.

It may seem strange that Christians would not want to convert the sanctuary into a Christian center and demonstrate the superiority of the monotheistic

religion. Although this is the case at some sanctuaries, many pagan centers did not see complete destruction or seizure.¹¹² One reason for this was because pagan sanctuaries were seen as polluted and undeserving of monotheistic worship. As Foschia has noted, several Christians viewed pagan temples as abhorrent, or the destruction of them counter to conversion efforts.¹¹³ Gregory of Nazianzus noted that his mother did not associate with pagans or even gaze upon pagan temples.¹¹⁴ Alternatively, Pope Gregory I wrote a letter to Ætherius, the Bishop of Lugdunum, condemning the practice of destroying pagan centers in Britain.¹¹⁵ Christian authorities recognized the importance of cultural memory, and did not want to violently overthrow it. Instead, many Christian authors from the second century AD and beyond chose to demonstrate the dominance of Christianity over the oracular shrine of Delphi in other ways. Particularly through oracular pronouncements (many likely fabricated) which declared Apollo's word silenced, and became the harbinger of Christian belief. The justification of pagan suppression was seen not by the destruction of Apollo's temple, but from his own words. The theological oracles from the sanctuaries of Claros and Didyma in Asia Minor satisfy the Christian desire for monotheism and provide pagans with the notion that this new God was simply a reformulation of the old gods.

While Delphi, during the second and third centuries AD, was witnessing a decline in oracular practice, Claros and Didyma in Asia Minor were still frequently issuing oracles. The nature of these responses may help us to understand why Delphi was declining while other sites were flourishing. New theological ideas, as opposed to traditional religious concerns, had become the focus of oracular matters and Delphi was not accustomed to deal with this change in practice. Didyma and Claros, however, were well suited to thrive in an atmosphere of new philosophical and religious ideas. Now the oracles of Asia Minor will be assessed to demonstrate how the nature of oracular consultation on the eastern side of the Aegean enhanced the success of the oracles there; consultations for which we find little parallel at Delphi.

Notes

- 1 Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 5.16, K. Heineman trans.
- 2 Marinatos (1993), p. 233.
- 3 Parke (1943), p. 19.
- 4 Plut. *Quaest. Graec.* 292e.
- 5 Plut. *De Pyth.* or. 398a, "οὐ γὰρ ἀρκεῖ τὸν θεὸν εἰς σῶμα καθεργνύναι θνητὸν ἄπαξ ἐκάστου μηνός." F. Cole Babbitt trans.
- 6 Parke (1943), p. 19. Three consultations recorded by Herodotus (7.140; 7.178; 8.36) all occurred in 480 BC.
- 7 Ricoeur (2000).
- 8 Clark (1977), pp. 10–13 and Alcock (1993), pp. 172–214.
- 9 Strabo 8.3.30, "τὴν δ' ἐπιφάνειαν ἔσχεν ἐξ ἀρχῆς μὲν διὰ τὸ μαντεῖον τοῦ Ὀλυμπίου Διός: ἐκείνου δ' ἐκλειφθέντος οὐδὲν ἦττον συνέμεινεν ἡ δόξα τοῦ ἱεροῦ, καὶ τὴν αὐξήσιν ὅσῃν ἴσμεν ἔλαβε διὰ τε τὴν πανήγυριν καὶ τὸν ἀγῶνα τὸν Ὀλυμπιακόν, στεφανίτην τε καὶ ἱερὸν νομισθέντα, μέγιστον τῶν πάντων." H.L. Jones trans.

- 10 Whitley (2001), p. 307.
- 11 This was not the only route, particularly since the Sacred Way was not complete until Roman times; there was a variety of paths to choose from, enhancing a visitors' experience; Jacquemin (1999), pp. 32–33.
- 12 Paus. 10.8.6, “ἔσελθόντι δὲ ἐς τὴν πόλιν εἰσὶν ἐφεξῆς ναοί: καὶ ὁ μὲν πρῶτος αὐτῶν ἐρείπια ἦν, ὁ ἐπὶ τούτῳ δὲ κενὸς καὶ ἀγαλμάτων καὶ ἀνδριάντων: ὁ δὲ αὐτῶν τρίτος καὶ ὁ τέταρτος, ὁ μὲν τῶν ἐν Ῥώμῃ βασιλευσάντων εἶχεν οὐ πολλῶν τινῶν εἰκόνας, ὁ τέταρτος δὲ Ἀθηναῖς καλεῖται Προνοίας.” W.H.S. Jones trans.
- 13 Neer (2004), p. 65.
- 14 Mee and Spawforth (2010), p. 305.
- 15 *Hymn to Pythian Apollo*, l. 254–274.
- 16 Amandry (1984).
- 17 On the myths of Apollo's first temples, see Sourvinou-Inwood (1979).
- 18 Courby (1927).
- 19 Hom. *Il.* 9.413, “κλέος ἄφθιτον.”
- 20 Hesiod, *Works and Days* 11, “εἰς ἕτερον γάρ τις τε ἰδὼν ἔργοιο χατίζει πλούσιον, ὃς σπεύδει μὲν ἀρώμεναι ἥδὲ φυτεύειν οἶκόν τ' εὖ θέσθαι: ζηλοὶ δὲ τε γείτονα γείτων εἰς ἄφενος σπεύδοντ': ἀγαθὴ δ' Ἔρις ἦδε βροτοῖσιν.” H.G. Evelyn-White trans.
- 21 Hdt. 8.36.2.
- 22 Arnush (1991), p. 18.
- 23 Whitley (2001), p. 294.
- 24 Hall (2002), pp. 134–154.
- 25 Aeschin. 2.116, “Θετταλοὺς, Βοιωτοὺς, οὐ Θηβαίους μόνους, Δωριέας, Ἴωνας, Περραιβοὺς, Μάγνητας, Δόλοπας, Λοκροὺς, Οἰταίους, Φθιώτας, Μαλιέας, Φωκέας.” C.D. Adams trans.
- 26 Valavanis (2004), p. 180.
- 27 Bonner and Smith (1943), p. 5.
- 28 Bonner and Smith (1943), p. 8, describe an instance in which the Amphictyony interfered with the citizens of Delphi, but the charge is unknown.
- 29 Davies (1998), p. 2.
- 30 Arnush (2000), p. 297.
- 31 For the different types of religious activities available at Delphi, see Amandry (2000).
- 32 Indeed, Plutarch tells us (*De E* 388e) that Dionysus' “share in Delphi is no less than that of Apollo” (καὶ πρὸς τὸν Διόνυσον, ὃ τῶν Δελφῶν οὐδὲν ἦττον ἢ τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι μέτεστιν). F. Cole Babbitt trans.
- 33 Amandry (2000), pp. 3–11.
- 34 For example, Apollo requests the people of Erythrai, an Ionian city in Asia Minor, should establish cults of Aphrodite, Demeter and Kore, Dionysus as well as another god whose name has disappeared. Fontenrose (1978), p. 258 H44. See also SIG 1014. This oracle is not included within the compilation of P&W.
- 35 Amandry (1984), p. 12.
- 36 Flacelière (1937), p. 112; Champion (1995), pp. 213–220; *FD* 3.1.483.4–5.
- 37 Amandry (2000), p. 13.
- 38 See Fontenrose H31, P&W response 284.
- 39 Pind. *Pae.* 6.58–64, “ἔρα[ται] δὲ μο[ι] γλῶσσα μέλιτος ἄφρον γλυκὺν ἀγῶνα Λοξία{ } καταβάντ' εὐρὺν ἐν θεῶν ξενία. θύεται γὰρ ἀγ'λαῖς ὑπὲρ Πανελλάδος, ἅν τε Δελφῶν ἐθ'[ν]ος εὖξατο λι-.” I. Rutherford trans. See Rutherford (2001), pp. 299, 305. This festival at Delphi is somewhat striking, as patron-god of strangers and guest-friends is a role typically assumed by Zeus. See also Hedreen (2011).
- 40 *SIG* 450 and *SIG* 579.
- 41 Nock (1972), pp. 585–586.

- 42 Pausanias (10.24.6) tells us that Neoptolemus was worshipped at Delphi after the sack of the Gauls in 279 BC. For his murder at Delphi, see Pind. *Pae.* 6.62–120 and *Nem.* 7.44–47. The attestation by Pindar complicates the impression given by Pausanias. See Fontenrose (1960).
- 43 However, as Kowalzig (2007), p. 187 notes, the paradox between the Panhellenic nature of the festival (as portrayed by the myth of Neoptolemus and Apollo) is juxtaposed with local myths. Despite the locality of the festival, the Theoxenia did contain a Panhellenic element and is one example of Delphic festivals drawing spectators and participants to the sanctuary.
- 44 Fontenrose (1988), p. 124.
- 45 The Olympic Games were instituted in 776 BC, Pythian Games were slightly before the Isthmian (581 BC) and Nemean (570 BC) Games.
- 46 *Hymn to Pythian Apollo*, l. 254–274.
- 47 Paus. 10.7.2.
- 48 Lipsey (2001), p. 16.
- 49 Picard (1989), p. 72.
- 50 Fontenrose (1988), p. 126, 484 BC and 382 BC respectively.
- 51 P&W, p. 286.
- 52 Weir (2004), p. 194.
- 53 Klose (2005), p. 126.
- 54 Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 14.18.
- 55 Klose (2005), p. 126.
- 56 Paus. 10.7.1; 10.19.1.
- 57 Titus was named archon at Delphi in AD 79 (*IG* 3.817); Domitian restored the temple (*SIG*³ 821); Trajan intervened in border disputes; and Hadrian served as archon and consulted the oracle himself (*SIG*³ 836.1–2).
- 58 For philosophers, see Tod (1957); for Pythian victors, see Weir (2004), for emperors, see Swain (1991).
- 59 Tucker (1982), pp. 225–236.
- 60 P&W, p. 261.
- 61 Plut. *De Pyth.* 394d–f. Basilocles says, “Our visitor is certainly eager to see the sights, and an unusually eager listener.” “ἡ φιλοθεάμων τις ἡμῖν καὶ περιττῶς φιλήκοός ἐστιν ὁ ξένος.”
- 62 Cicero *De Finibus* 5.2.5, “...id quidem infinitum est in hac urbe; quacumque enim ingredimus, in aliqua historia vestigium ponimus,” as cited by Alcock (1993), p. 195. Other authors have reinforced the idea that Greece under the Roman Empire was viewed as a cultural museum; see Elsner (2001) and Spawforth (2012).
- 63 Weir (2004), pp. 108–114.
- 64 Tod (1957), p. 154; *SIG* 868A, *PIR*² II p. 79, no. 339.
- 65 *FD*, III.2.116 from the Athenian Treasury. See also Tod (1957), p. 134. See Chapter 7 for the rise of philosophical authority and its influence on Delphi’s decline.
- 66 Jacquemin (1999), p. 299.
- 67 For the ivory statuettes, see Vanderpool (1949).
- 68 Hdt. 1.14 for Gyges and Midas, Hdt. 1.50 for Croesus.
- 69 Scott (2010), p. 145.
- 70 Plut. *Flam.* 12.6.
- 71 Stadter (2014), p. 90.
- 72 Plut. *Aem.* 28.2, “τοὺς γὰρ ἡττημένους τοῖς νικῶσιν ἐξίστασθαι χώρας προσήκειν.” B. Perrin trans.
- 73 Plut. *Sull.* 12.6–9.
- 74 Bowie (2001), pp. 21–32.
- 75 Paus. 10.11.1, “πλησίον δὲ τοῦ ἀναθήματος τοῦ Ταραντίνων Σικωνίων ἐστὶ θησαυρός· χρήματα δὲ οὔτε ἐνταῦθα ἴδοις ἂν οὔτε ἐν ἄλλῳ τῶν θησαυρῶν.” His report, although after the supposed revival during Plutarch’s priesthood and

Hadrian's reign, still must have faithfully represented what he saw there; it must be remembered that the lootings of Nero and the plundering of Sulla would have made the sanctuary much different from in Classical times. Pausanias may have been trying to distinguish his own time from the heyday of the oracle.

- 76 Akujärvi (2005), pp. 60–64 lists 155 cross-references. For example, he promises (1.8.1–2) to describe the Gallic invasion but saves the account until the section on Delphi (10.19.4).
- 77 Scott (2010), p. 229.
- 78 Pretzler (2007), p. 7. Strangely, none of the Homeric sites are visited either.
- 79 Regenbogen (1956), p. 1011 argues that it is a corruption of the text.
- 80 Habicht (1985), pp. 7–8.
- 81 Sidebottom (2002), pp. 494–499.
- 82 As mentioned in Chapter 1, Nero stole 500 bronze statues from Delphi (Paus. 10.7.1). Sulla sacked the temple of Apollo and all its accumulated riches to fund the war with Mithridates in 87 or 86 BC (Paus. 1.20.7).
- 83 McNerney (2002), p. 51–52. He notes the contrast between the meagre attestation of Roman dedications and “the almost manic detail of his description of Greek dedications in the vicinity of the altar...”
- 84 Weir (2004), pp. 104–05. The exceptions are one of the buildings on the Marmaria terrace which included several statues of emperors (10.8.6) as well as the stadium that was still under construction during his visit (10.32.1).
- 85 Paus. 10.9.1–2, “ὅποσα δὲ τῶν ἀναθημάτων εἶναι μοι λόγου μάλιστα ἄξια ἐφαίνετο, ποιησόμεθα ἀθλητὰς μὲν οὖν καὶ ὄσαι ἀγωνισταὶ μουσικῆς τῶν ἀνθρώπων τοῖς πλείοσιν ἐγίνοντο μετὰ οὐδενὸς λογισμοῦ, μετὰ τῆς οὐ πάνυ τι ἡγοῦμαι σπουδῆς ἀξίους: ἀθλητὰς δὲ ὅποσοι τι καὶ ὑπελείποντο ἐς δόξαν, ἐν λόγῳ σφᾶς ἐδήλωσα τῷ ἐς Ἥλειους.”
- 86 Weir (2004), pp. 104–105.
- 87 A few treasures which he mentions include: the Treasury House of Thebes (10.11.4); The Athenian Colonnade (10.11.5); Corinthian Treasury (10.13.3–4). For examples of statues, see the head of a bison (10.13.1); Heracles and Apollo fighting over a tripod (10.13.4); bronze wolf (10.14.1); bronze date-palm (10.15.3); bronze goat (10.16.3); bronze ox (10.16.3); and notably the famous tripod of gold and bronze snake (10.13.4) that was taken to Constantinople by Constantine.
- 88 Paus. 10.14., “μὴ μοι Περσῆος σκύλων περικαλλέα κόσμον, νηῶ ἐγκαταθῆς: οἰκόνδ’ ἀπόπεμπε τάχιστα.”
- 89 Daux (1936), pp. 159–162; Bourguet (1914), p. 206 mentions the wealth of dedications found at the terrace in front of the temple, many associated with Roman emperors; see also Jacquemin (1999) for an inventory.
- 90 On the Gallic invasion see Paus. 10.19.5–23.14; on his promise to cover the invasion see Sidebottom (2002), pp. 497–498 and Paus. 1.8.1–2; and for the painting see Paus. 10.25–31.12.
- 91 Paus. 10.32.1, “τὰ μὲν δὴ ἀνήκοντα ἐς συγγραφὴν τοσαῦτά τε καὶ τοιαῦτα κατ’ ἐμὲ ἦν τὰ δὲ λειπόμενα ἐν Δελφοῖς.”
- 92 Athanassiadi (1989), p. 274. See also *FD* III, Nos 269 and 331.
- 93 P&W 471. This inscription is found in Tralles in Asia Minor. Although Pythian Apollo is specifically mentioned, Fontenrose (1978), pp. 190–191 offers the possibility that the oracle was requested at either Didyma or Claros and merely inscribed as Pythian to designate Apollo as the speaker. He recalls a similar oracle given at Didyma after the Goths invaded c. AD 260 which also refers to Apollo as “Pythian” despite the origin from Didyma. On the origin of the Didymeion oracle, see Wiegand (1924), p. 22.
- 94 Fontenrose (1978), p. 264. See Chapters 4 and 5 on the syncretistic nature of Greek religion in relation to Delphi.
- 95 Fontenrose (1978), p. 191.

- 96 For the oracle issued in AD 228, see P&W 469, Fontenrose Q258. The oracle issued in AD 262 is of disputed provenance; see Chapter 4 (pp. 107–108).
- 97 P&W 474, Fontenrose Q261. By Delphi's final years of operation, the oracle seems to begin to transfer its authority to the popular philosophers of the day, a theme which will be addressed in Chapter 7.
- 98 Laurent (1899); Dyggve (1948); Amandry (1989); Levin (1989).
- 99 Athanassiadi (1989), p. 275.
- 100 Likely due to the poverty of the *polis* and the region in general; see Robertson-Brown (2006), p. 311; see also Julian *Or.* 6.188a and Julian *Ep.* 35.
- 101 Déroche (1989), p. 2720.
- 102 Jacquemin (1999), p. 326.
- 103 Robertson-Brown (2006), p. 315.
- 104 Athanassiadi (1989), pp. 274–75.
- 105 Vatin (1962), pp. 238–241.
- 106 Athanassiadi (1989), p. 277.
- 107 Robertson-Brown (2006), p. 313.
- 108 Déroche (1989), p. 2721.
- 109 Foschia (2000), p. 423.
- 110 Robertson-Brown (2006), p. 311. See also *CTh* 15.5.4.
- 111 Amandry (1989) pp. 42–47.
- 112 For the Christianization of Greek sanctuaries, see Foschia (2000).
- 113 Foschia (2000), pp. 421–23.
- 114 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations* 13.9.
- 115 Pope Gregory the Great, *Epistles* 11.56.

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4 Theological oracles from Didyma

Apollo enim, quem praeter ceteros divinum maximeque fatidicum existimant, Colophone respondens, quod Delphis, credo, migraverat amoenitate Asiae ductus...

Apollo indeed, whom they think is divine above all the rest, answers questions at Colophon, because from Delphi, I believe, he had moved, led by the attraction of Asia.¹

Lactantius may have been writing ironically about the draws of Asia Minor. His *Divinae Institutiones* was written sometime between AD 304 and 313, and, as a Christian, his aim was to release pagans from their erroneous beliefs.² However, he does seem to be the first Christian writer to enhance the perception of Christian theology through the lens of pagan oracles and in this way his attitude creates an ambivalent impression rather than an aggressive one. Lactantius uses Apollo's words as evidence favorable to monotheism, and attempts to demonstrate that pagan oracles agree with the essential teaching of Christian doctrine. If these lines existed in isolation it could be seen as a mere literary tool, or some passing judgment on the movements of Apollo. However, combined with Plutarch's writings, which describe the diminished frequency of consultation at Delphi, it seems that there may be some substance to Lactantius' words, that the oracles of Asia Minor were sought more often than Delphi by the second century AD through to the fourth century and the closure of oracles.

As seen in Chapter 2, the discussion of oracles had become a topic which greatly interested the characters in Plutarch's dialogues on Delphi. It is *De Defectu Oraculorum* which supports Lactantius' claim that by the second century AD and beyond Apollo preferred his oracles in Asia Minor over Delphi. As Demetrius noted, "we see the evanescence (ἁμαύρωσιν) of the oracles here (at Delphi), or rather the total disappearance (δυσεῖν) of all but one or two..."³ I argue in this and the following chapter that 'all but one or two' oracles refers to the oracles of Didyma and Claros. This chapter will demonstrate that the oracle of Didyma was thriving during a time when fewer consultations were given at Delphi and, specifically, that the different *types* of questions assumed appropriate for Apollo to answer in Asia are significantly distinct from extant

responses from Delphi. The following chapter will provide the same type of analysis regarding the oracle of Claros in Asia Minor.

As Delphi's significance and numbers of consultations dwindled, the oracles of Claros and Didyma in Asia Minor were experiencing a revival, not only in terms of the sanctuaries themselves and material dedications, like at Delphi, but also an increase in questions presented to Apollo. Particularly, the new and different types of questions seemed to attract additional visitors to the oracles. Political and state concerns were addressed to the god, as well as questions concerning magic, the nature of god, and theurgic concerns of the soul. Nock has described these oracular responses as "theological" and, perhaps, the nature of the questions presented at Didyma and Claros will help to understand why Delphi, on the one hand, slipped further into silence as the oracles of Asia Minor, on the other, continued to thrive.⁴ The main aim of this chapter is to examine the impact that the theological oracles had upon Didyma, and the manner in which the inclusion of these new ideas assisted in its survival.

As has been shown, the number of responses from Delphi declined in number throughout the centuries after the conquest of Alexander the Great. In the first centuries of our era, the oracles of Asia Minor were experiencing a different trend – Didyma and Claros were undergoing a revival.⁵ The nature of the revival can be seen from the increase in extant responses in general, as well as the numerous politically significant oracles which were not seen at Delphi. Most of the recorded responses from Didyma date to AD 100–225, and for Claros, the earliest inscription dates from the second century AD, and the latest dates to the middle of the third century AD – this marks the period of Claros' greatest activity.⁶ Hence the oracles of Asia Minor were operating on a much more extensive and "international" scale than they had done in the past, a greater scale than is evident at Delphi during this time. The success or relative increase in frequency and stately significance of oracular consultation of these sanctuaries can be seen in several different manifestations: political, geographical, and religious. In this chapter and the following, each center will be examined separately in order to demonstrate how and why Didyma and Claros experienced such success, while Delphi was falling into relative desuetude.

Oracular success: oracles in Asia Minor

In order to demonstrate the thriving reputation and the degree of success Claros and Didyma shared during the first centuries AD, geographic, economic, political, and social issues are of considerable concern. These influences greatly affected the oracles and their respective regions. The success of these oracles is tied to the relative prosperity of Asia Minor, compared to mainland Greece, which had witnessed poverty and population decline during the Roman era.⁷ Additionally, the oracles of Asia Minor were not as intrinsically tied to the workings of the *polis* as Delphi had been and, in the centuries after Alexander's conquests, they were better suited to adapt to this changing socio-political dynamic.⁸ Asia Minor had trade and cultural ties to the Mediterranean and the

East, which created an amalgamation of cultures, ideas, and religions – a unique societal blend. Their relatively late flowering made these oracles particularly adept at dealing with the changing concerns of the day.

Both Claros and Didyma shared the fortune of an affluent geographic location. Asia Minor was prosperous due to secure trade routes, fertile soil, and olive productions; this prosperity allowed the sanctuaries in the area to benefit from certain economic considerations and exceptions.⁹ For instance, one gathers from the evidence of boundary markers that Didyma possessed large territories of sacred land.¹⁰ Sanctuaries in Asia Minor, in general, accumulated great wealth due to the frequency of visitors, donations, and sacrifices. The importance of these sanctuaries is attested by the attention paid to them by Roman emperors and officials. Restoration and rebuilding of sanctuaries in Asia Minor occurred as early as Augustus, who claimed that he restored votive offerings to the temples of all the Asian cities.¹¹ Certainly, compared to mainland Greece during the Hellenistic and particularly in the Roman era, Asia Minor had a prosperous agricultural economy and extensive trade networks, rendering it relatively wealthy, which in turn invited the interest of Rome. This aspect certainly contributed to the success the oracles of Asia Minor shared, compared to Delphi which was one of the poorer provinces during the Roman period. Alcock has described it as a “tax-exporting” province, in which most of the tax income collected there was brought to Italy; whereas much of the tax collected in Asia Minor was reinvested into the area.¹² However, one must look further than economic considerations. Although important, these do not *entirely* account for the success or failure of a religious institution.

Roman patronage

Rome’s patronage is a key factor in the continued success of both Didyma and Claros. This can be seen in Roman attention to the Didymaeian festival, of which the Romans assumed control in 84 BC because Miletus had sided with Mithridates of Pontos.¹³ The Didymaeian athletic competitions would have attracted pilgrims to visit and consult the oracle, adding to the prestige of Didyma. They were no longer trusted to direct the festival, and Rome intervened with invested interest. Julius Caesar extended the Didymaeian asylum by two miles, and a Roman law made an exception for Apollo at Didyma (as well as seven other sanctuaries) allowing him to inherit property and money, whereas other gods were prohibited to do so. Rome always held Didyma in high esteem, and three emperors – Trajan, Hadrian, and Julian – were even chosen as prophets at Didyma.¹⁴ Rome’s interest in the area of Miletus, Aphrodisias, and Ephesus greatly contributed to the prosperity of the region. Miletus had been ruled by the Seleucids but was granted an increase in territory when it allied with Rome.¹⁵ Before the Persian invasion, Miletus had been one of the wealthiest and most prosperous *poleis* in the Greek world and, even after the Persian Wars, Miletus still held geographic significance. In addition to its strategic position on a peninsula with excellent harbors, it was

also near the mouth of the Maeander River, which allowed access to the interior of Anatolia.

Roman patronage can be seen in the construction of an altar of Augustus which was built in Miletus, as well as a temple of Caligula.¹⁶ Notably, when Trajan visited in AD 100, he began to build within the city and along the Sacred Way. The size of the original Hellenistic theater was increased to provide seating for 15,000 people. This attests to its prosperity, and surely suggests an increase in the number of pilgrims, demonstrating that Miletus and specifically Didyma were attracting visitors. Indeed, Roman support was seen in the opposite direction as well: embassies from Didyma were frequently sent to Rome to negotiate grants and immunities.¹⁷

The oracles of Asia Minor benefitted from an advantageous geographical and political landscape, which could contribute to their continued success in the first centuries AD. However, the types of oracular responses issued at each sanctuary also assisted in their prosperity. As we shall see, differences between Delphi and the oracles of Asia Minor are seen not only in oracular procedure, but also in the oracular responses themselves. Both of these aspects were developed to meet a spiritual need in an age that yearned for external and metaphysical certainty. As Athanassiadi has noted, “a statistical study of the surviving oracles from the second and third century allows two main concerns to emerge: the proclamation of henotheistic theology and the reform of cult.”¹⁸ The populations of Asia Minor turned to their oracles for assistance in these matters, whereas people in Greece did not seek guidance from Delphi as often.

Didyma: the sanctuary and oracular procedure

Didyma had been operating outside of Miletus’ authority for some centuries before the Persians sacked it in 494 BC when the temple and the sanctuary were destroyed. Sadly, most of the evidence concerning Didyma before the Persian sack is lost, so it is unclear how the oracle operated in the Archaic era. Once Alexander gained control over Ionia in 334 BC, he established a democratic government and Miletus entered a new era of prosperity. Callisthenes, Alexander’s personal historian, explains the tale of Didyma’s revival in order to reinforce Alexander’s greatness: Apollo had abandoned the oracle, but after Alexander’s visit to the sanctuary, the spring flowed again and prophecy returned.¹⁹

Reconstruction of Didyma was partly precipitated by the contribution of Seleucus Nicator, who became the benefactor of Miletus in 301 BC. However, the temple took centuries to construct and was, indeed, still incomplete during the reign of Caligula (AD 37–41).²⁰ The success of Didyma can certainly be seen in the grand reconstruction of the temple which is arguably one of the most impressive temples in the ancient world. It could be seen from miles away due to the size of the columns. The plans themselves attest to the pretensions of Miletus of becoming a major power, and the success of Didyma in this period is intimately tied with the prosperity of Miletus. Didyma had a lapse of clientele whilst the site lay in rubble between the time of the Persian attack and

Alexander's efforts of revival. After reconstruction of the temple commenced, the sanctuary flourished again: since the temple was crucial for oracular consultation, oracles could again be delivered.

The oracular process at Didyma remains unclear from the information in all extant sources. We hear from Iamblichus more information regarding the consultation procedure:

The prophetic woman too in Branchidae, whether she holds in her hand a wand, which was at first received from some God, and becomes filled with a divine splendor, or whether seated on an axis, she predicts future events, or dips her feet or the border of her garment in the water, or receives the God by imbibing the vapor of the water; by all these she becomes adapted to partake externally of the God.²¹

The fact that she accessed the divine *pneuma*, either by dipping her skirt in the water or via a dagger, shows that the procedure was not entirely clear to sources in the third century AD. Lane Fox reconstructs an account of consultation at Didyma and explains the variety of methods suggested by Iamblichus, "these ways are not alternatives, but differing aspects of a single ceremony."²² Or perhaps, different priestesses could use different methods of prophecy. However, most convincingly, Addey argues that Iamblichus' "repeated use of the word εἴτε (*whether...or*) when discussing the ritual preparations undertaken by the Pythia serves to highlight their inferiority as a cause of oracles in comparison with the supreme power of the deity."²³ In this Aristotelian context, the *cause* is most important when dissecting prophecy. This concept of Iamblichus – that oracular ritual was subordinate compared to the supreme powers of the divine – is important and addressed in Chapter 7. It does appear that each aspect is a part of a series of preparations for divine inspiration. As Busine has shown, Iamblichus' account of oracular procedure at Didyma was heavily influenced by his views on theurgy and theories of divine inspiration.²⁴ However, it is likely that a priestess was involved in oracular consultation at Didyma: Origen, who mentions a priestess working at Didyma, corroborates Iamblichus' version.²⁵ Water is frequently used as a tool in oracular procedure throughout the Mediterranean, so its use is likely in the mantic procedure. This uncertainty regarding the process of oracular delivery at Didyma is also seen in relation to Delphi, and most Greek oracles for that matter.

The structure of the temple at Didyma is unique and the manner of its construction suggests that it was directly linked to the method of prophecy. Despite the lack of a description of the mechanisms for prophecy, the temple must have performed a key function. To reach the inner area of the temple one must first climb a few stairs to the portico lined with several pillars. On either side of the main *naos* are two steep but narrow hallway entrances into the inner sanctuary. Epigraphic records of the construction of the temple refer to these passages as labyrinths (λαβυρίνθοι).²⁶ It is likely that this form of construction was directly linked to the oracular procedure at Didyma, particularly when one

compares this temple and oracular procedure with that of Claros' temple, addressed in Chapter 5. In addition, this temple layout is well suited to assist in Mystery rites, with pseudo-secret paths leading into the inner chamber of the temple.²⁷ There is no roof inside the temple at Didyma although it is uncertain whether one was ever intended. The labyrinths open up to a large courtyard surrounded by high walls. During the Hellenistic era, there was a spring and perhaps a smaller *adyton* inside the courtyard, most likely tied to divinatory practice. The first epigraphic record of responses dates to 228/7 BC, indicating that the temple must have been largely completed by 250 BC.²⁸

Epigraphy assists in reconstructing the oracular procedure of Didyma, but it is limited. The titles of cult officials are found in inscriptions at Didyma, *prophētēs* (προφήτης), *hydrophoros* (ὕδροφόρος) or “water-bearer,” *tamias* (ταμίας), or “treasurer,” *hypochrēstēs* (ὑποχρήστης), *grammateus* (γραμματεὺς), *paraphylax* (παραφύλαξ), and *neōkoroī* (νεωκόροι) are attested several times, but their exact roles are unclear.²⁹ Noteworthy is the single attestation of a priest (ἱερέα) at Didyma from a third-century verse inscription.³⁰ It is clear that a diversity of cult officials existed at Didyma, but the most prominent were the prophet, water bearer, and the treasurer. However, despite our uncertainty, there is clearly an increase in oracular practice at Didyma beginning in the Hellenistic period.

The oracle enjoyed a constant stream of visitors, and an oracle is extant for each period of 50 years after the rebuilding of the temple. In the second and third centuries AD, particularly, the oracle continued to be consulted, and was relatively active in the fourth century AD. Of the 78 responses catalogued by Fontenrose, 63 (80%) can be dated; and 29 (46%) of these date to the first century AD or later.³¹ Indeed, “consultations, copious sacrifices, dedications of altars and other personal acts of piety are reported at the oracle, while not a single “prophetless year” – ἀπροφήτευτος ἐνιαυτός – is attested from that period,” and this suggests enough clientele to maintain the office consistently.³² The last of the responses at Didyma, like at Delphi, is addressed to the Emperor Julian.³³ Didyma, and other Greek oracles, likely ceased operation shortly thereafter, due to Theodosius' edict of AD 391, but in the few centuries leading up to this point Didyma continued to flourish.

One reason for this increase in consultation can be seen in relation to the time gap between the destruction of the site and the rebuilding. This period may have allowed for a break in the traditional administration of the temple as well as the religious practices.³⁴ During the reconstruction of the administration, while Miletus sought to maintain some aspects of the traditional oracular ways, some were changed. For example, the office of the *prophetes* at Delphi was for life, whereas at democratic Miletus, the office was annual. This allowed for a flexibility of administration which would foster an adaptable institution. Under new management, Miletus could rebuild Didyma to accommodate the concerns of the day, no longer bound by the traditional ways of the past.

During the Archaic era, oracles from Didyma were often delivered in prose. After the reconstruction, and apparently using Delphi as a model, women were

implemented as the prophetesses at Didyma and they largely gave their responses in verse.³⁵ It is striking that just as the Pythia was speaking less in verse, the prophetess at Didyma adopted the practice. In contrast, although Delphi's temple was destroyed by an earthquake in 373 BC, and oracular consultations were likely put on hold during the many years of reconstruction, the administration of the temple and sanctuary by the Amphictyony continued unabated.³⁶

Didyma enjoyed the clientele of emperors and kings, who consulted Apollo on important state matters. For example, responses 41–43 catalogued by Fontenrose were given to Seleucus in c. 334 BC. In one response, Apollo instructs Seleucus to make Daphne sacred to Apollo upon taking the Syrian kingship.³⁷ Centuries later, the oracle continued to be consulted by prestigious leaders, as seen when the Emperor Licinius asked Apollo Didymaeus about his war with Constantine in AD 323.³⁸ The fact that the oracle was consulted by kings and emperors shows that Didyma held a continued prestige and the late date of such imperial consultations is in contrast to the few state consultations made at Delphi. While Delphi relied on services besides the oracle, such as the Games or other activities at the sanctuary, it appears that the oracle at Didyma was sufficient to draw visitors. This is not to say that the day-to-day practice at Didyma, such as the Games, did not assist in attracting visitors and enhancing the popularity and fame of the sanctuary. Indeed, religious festivals, such as the Didymaea, contributed to Didyma's fame. However, the oracle continued to attract important patrons which would have spread the fame of the oracle rather than simply the site.

The responses do show a similarity to Delphi: they are largely in verse, and their function, as with most oracles of the ancient world, was concerned with directions and sanctions rather than prophecies and predictions. For example, Apollo told a certain Hermias, in verse, to make a thanks offering to Zeus Hysistos and another oracle directed the Milesians to propitiate Asphaleos Poseidon with sacrifices under this epithet and ask him to come to their assistance.³⁹ It is striking that many of the verse oracles from Didyma date to the same time as a revival of verse seen at Delphi, demonstrating a universal return to oracular verse.⁴⁰ This is significant as it could reflect a desire within the priestly caste to reconnect to the literary genre of former times, perhaps helping to re-establish the prestige and fame of the oracular centers. The majority of responses from both Delphi and Didyma concerns religious matters, but several responses from Didyma show an interest in matters which fall outside traditional Greek religion.

Theological responses

One of the most intriguing aspects of the responses from Didyma, as distinct from Delphi, is a concern with "theological" questions. Nock has defined these oracles in the sense that they deal with religious concerns, such as the nature of God and religious truths, and perhaps go so far as to demonstrate a rational

inquiry into religious questions.⁴¹ I define “theological oracles” as those questions presented to an oracular site which fall outside the established oracle-seeking queries, particularly focused on the nature of the divine and are not common to traditional Greco-Roman religion. Clearly, oracles were already consulted on grounds of religious prescriptions and sanctions for certain rituals or sacrifices, but questions at Didyma were sometimes directed at understanding other religious sentiments besides those of traditional Greco-Roman religion. The theological nature of several consultations significantly contributed to the success of this oracle at the time, particularly among intellectuals, sophists, and philosophers. The theological aspects include the interpretation of the divine, particularly gods and religion, in a philosophically significant way; many of the queries were aimed at personal understanding rather than a public service. Many concern matters that appear to increase in importance from the Hellenistic period forward, particularly in the first few centuries AD.

Before looking at examples of questions presented to Apollo, these inquiries must first be placed into their proper historical context. Religious inquiry was constantly developing in the Greek world and the function of the responses within the *polis* was being redefined. In the second and third centuries AD, a time contemporaneous with many of the theological oracles addressed below, Neoplatonism began to take hold in intellectual circles and promoted sentiments similar to those of the Stoics, who maintained a belief in a supreme god with various manifestations. Maximus of Tyre, a forerunner of the Neoplatonists, tells us: “In such a mighty contest, sedition and discord, you will see one according law and assertion in all the earth, that there is one God, the king and father of all things, and many gods, sons of god, ruling together with him.”⁴² Also, he asserts that God has only one nature, but many names.⁴³ Although the examples are from the philosophical elite, the various theological oracles from Asia Minor provide evidence that these ideas infiltrated the religious circles throughout the Roman Empire.

As populations moved from all ends of the world into the Hellenized cities, they brought with them their culture, education, and gods. In this way, society became much more cosmopolitan and the gods also became more universal. This is evidenced by the increasing tendency to deify abstract ideas such as Mercy, Fear, Fate, and Concord.⁴⁴ The contact with the Near East greatly influenced Greco-Roman religious thought: the Greeks and Romans began to identify their own gods with those of the immigrants and also adopted new gods into their pantheon.⁴⁵ Hellenistic religion was generally tending toward a desire for a personal connection with the divine, and this concept was particularly emphasized in Neoplatonism in the second and third centuries AD.⁴⁶ Although there is not one particular feature or focus of Hellenistic religion, one aspect is clear – there is a distancing from the traditional Olympian gods of the Archaic and Classical periods.

Now I turn to the oracular responses for specific examples of this trend as manifested at Didyma. For example, Apollo was asked whether Christ was a god or a man and told the inquirer: “He was mortal in flesh, wise in

miraculous deeds, but he was made prisoner by the Chaldean lawgivers and nailed to stakes, and came to meet a painful death.”⁴⁷ For Lactantius the truth is in the first line – Christ was mortal in flesh. Although he admits that Apollo seemed to deny that Christ was a god, this is not a problem for Lactantius: the crucial element is that Apollo agreed with the Lactantius’ argument – Jesus was born a man.⁴⁸ He suggests that this is an authentic response from Apollo at Didyma, as he says: “it is no wonder that Apollo convinced ignorant people of the truth of this...”⁴⁹ However, Fontenrose believes it to be a “pious Christian invention,” and certainly many of the oracular responses found only in Christian writers must be approached with caution.⁵⁰ Indeed, Lactantius’ literary agenda was to demonstrate pagan oracular knowledge of Christian doctrine. This oracle would certainly serve his purpose.

Not all scholars agree that this oracle was a Christian invention: Digeser suggests that Lactantius’ oracle may stem from a Greek source. She notes a parallel between the allusion to Christ’s crucifixion and a passage from Augustine which he ascribes to Porphyry’s *De Philosophia ex Oraculis Haurienda* and this oracle ends with a similar sentiment to that of Lactantius.⁵¹ The similarities between “Chaldean judges” and “judges,” as well as “nailed to stakes” and “iron-bound death” (*ferro vincta mors*), create a parallel which suggests a common source. Digeser proposes that Lactantius may have even inserted “Chaldean lawgiver” to allude to Porphyry, considering his connection to Chaldean Oracles.⁵² Lactantius may have invented these oracles for his own cause, but it seems unlikely. He faithfully recorded other oracles from Didyma and Claros which stem from non-Christian sources, so it would not be surprising to find this oracle to be authentic.⁵³ The number of oracular compilations circulated at the time would have been well known and Lactantius’ non-Christian audience would have required authenticity for Lactantius’ argument to work at all. In other words, it would be in his best interest to record oracles faithfully, since, as a convert to Christianity himself, Lactantius would have been familiar with many of the traditional sources and have chosen the ones which upheld his newly acquired beliefs. That this response could be attributed to Didyma at all shows that these sorts of questions were motives to consult the god. Additionally, it demonstrates that people were curious about religions other than the traditional Greek beliefs and sought answers from Apollo Didymaeus. It is not surprising that Didyma was consulted in these issues, rather than, say Apollo at Delphi, because the region is a significant in terms of Christianity as well as the Jewish diaspora.⁵⁴

Interest in Jewish religion was prominent in Asia Minor as many Jewish people migrated there during the diaspora. Eventually, the religious and cultural aspects of Judaism spread to the Greeks living there – indeed, some Greeks embraced aspects of the religion. These people “are understood as a group of pagans who attended the synagogue regularly and adopted some Jewish customs such as Sabbath observance and food laws but who were not circumcised and so were not full members of the Jewish community in the way that proselytes were.”⁵⁵ This involvement by Greeks in religions other than their own is

reflected by several questions presented to Apollo at Didyma – a demonstration of the new, contemporary religious beliefs and practices.

Although the Jews had influence in Asia Minor, that did not prevent them from being persecuted, especially once Christianity became prominent. This is evidenced by a response from Apollo concerning the persecution of the Jews by Diocletian.⁵⁶ As with the response noted above, caution must be exercised when considering this oracle, as the source is Christian. However, Grégoire has argued that the inscription *DI* 306 is a record of this consultation, evidence that the response supported a non-Christian bias.⁵⁷ The authenticity of the oracle can never be firmly established and it is unlikely that a response, even coming through the proxy of a Christian source, would be drastically different from the reality of oracular consultation. In this case Lactantius could have incorporated a Greek oracle from an independent source to fulfil his motive, rather than just inventing it. Despite the issues concerning the veracity and the negative nature of this response, it demonstrates the interest, albeit hostile, in other religions. This is largely due to the changing political, social, and religious climate of the day which was caused by the movement of various people into new areas, bringing with them their culture and religion. Didyma embraced this new dynamic culture, enhancing the oracle's ability to attract visitors.

Another response from Didyma shows this interest in Jewish religion. The question presented asks about which is better – reason or law. The answer alludes to the God of the Hebrews as the king of all.⁵⁸ Although this response is cited by two Christian authors, Lactantius and Augustine, the latter is referencing Porphyry, therefore removing much of the potential Christian bias.⁵⁹ This further supports the possibility that Lactantius quoted the oracles in his work from Greek sources and reinforces the authenticity of many of the theological oracles. The Christian bias must be noted, but aspects of the response are still likely to stem from a Greek source.⁶⁰ These theological questions presented to Apollo Didymaeus clearly reflect the interest of Porphyry, Augustine, and Lactantius in various religions, but they also demonstrate the different types of questions presented to Apollo: the oracles are no longer solely consulted about traditional Greco-Roman gods, rituals, and rites.

Another question asked at Didyma demonstrates a change in the type of questions thought appropriate for Apollo to answer: a query concerned with the immortality of the soul. Polites consulted Didyma on whether the soul survives death or vanishes, and the god responded in verse:

As long as the soul is bound by chains to the body, it meets corrupting experiences and yields to mortal ills. But when it finds quick mortal release after the body's decay, it goes entirely to the sky, being ever ageless, and remains forever incorruptible. For this is what the first-born divine providence ordained.⁶¹

Although this response is recorded by Lactantius, the original author is unlikely to be Christian. The ideas inherent in the poem are clearly Platonic and the

poet implies that *everyone's* soul, not only those of Christians, goes to the sky after death. The Christian bias is not explicitly seen, so it can be suggested that Lactantius is recording the views of a Neoplatonist and, indeed, an idea of the soul and the afterlife that was common in late antiquity.⁶² Lactantius, as we have seen, has faithfully recorded several authentic oracles and, as Pricoco has shown, the same holds for this oracle.⁶³ Not only is Polites an attested name in the region of Miletus, the name is also known from an inscription at the sanctuary itself.⁶⁴ Also, much like the oracle from Oenoanda, discussed in Chapter 5, this oracle is found in the collection of oracles and other material called the *Tübingen Theosophy*, a fifth-century work of an anonymous Christian author living during the reign of Zeno (AD 474–491). This evidence is “incorporated into a larger work called ‘On True Belief,’ which Christians cited to show that even the pagan gods acknowledged the truth and superiority of the Christian faith.”⁶⁵ The oracle is found in this text, but with notable differences. This makes it likely that the author of the *Theosophy* knew of another version besides that of Lactantius, which suggests that oracular texts of this kind were common and Lactantius, because his audience was already familiar with similar types of oracles, could easily cite them.⁶⁶

Oracular compilations were popular in the second, third, and fourth centuries AD and many of them tend to include oracles from Asia Minor. Oenomaus of Gadara compiled a selection of thirty-six oracles in the second century AD entitled *Exposure of the Charlatans*. Some are traditional responses from Delphi, but three are given directly to him at Claros. It is a negative treatise, but still a valuable source of information. Porphyry, in the third century AD, compiled his collection, *De Philosophia ex Oraculis*, which did not include traditional oracles, but were from contemporary sources and he explicitly indicates Didyma as the source for many of the responses.⁶⁷ Finally, in terms of “pagan” compilations, Cornelius Labeo created a collection of oracles from Claros called *De Oraculo Apolloomis Clari*, in the late third century AD. Based on these extant compilations, it is clear that oracles from Asia Minor were popular sources for the responses. However, Delphi still features here, but seemingly to a lesser extent. This could mean that Delphic compilations did not survive, or that Delphi was a less desired source for these types of works. Either way, it demonstrates the interest and authority of both Didyma and Claros.

Christian authors also compiled oracular treatises, as we have seen – Eusebius, Augustine, and Lactantius all include oracles to suit their agenda. Delphi does not seem to be the main target for these apologists, as Busine notes: “It should be stressed that Lactantius ascribed all the oracles he quoted to an oracular Apollo: one oracle to the god of Colophon...in Claros, three oracles to the Apollo of Miletus...in Didyma, and three fragments to Apollo Smintheus...in Mysia.”⁶⁸ In other words, none from Delphi. The argument from silence does not provide a solid foundation, but it is noteworthy that many of the oracular compilations of the second, third, and fourth century AD tend to focus on the oracles of Asia Minor. The reason for this could be the theological nature of the oracular responses from these sanctuaries – not only do they align with

many philosophical sentiments of the day, they allow for a theological debate between pagans and Christians.

Finally, there is an oracle similar to that given to Polites, as cited by Philostratus in his *Vita Apollonii*:

The soul is immortal, and is no possession
of your own, but of Providence,
and after the body is wasted away,
like a swift horse freed from its traces,
It lightly leaps forward
and mingles itself with the light air,
loathing the spell of harsh and painful servitude
which it has endured.
But for you, what use is there in this? Someday,
when you are no more, you shall believe it.
So why, as long as you are among living beings,
do you explore these mysteries?⁶⁹

It is significant that it is Apollonius himself who utters this oracle, “established like an oracular tripod,” (τρίπους ἔστηκεν). As we shall see in Chapter 7, philosophers began to take the place of oracular institutions, and people increasingly sought their advice on divine knowledge rather than the gods. Theurgy – a key aspect of which was the transmigration of the soul – was becoming very popular in the second and third centuries AD.⁷⁰ Although the main adherents to this practice were the intellectual elite, oracles such as these suggest a more ubiquitous nature of the beliefs – aspects of the philosophy had infiltrated civic cult. Many aspects of this period show a shift in ways of thought and practice; “intellectually, the second and third centuries AD have been judged to have preferred revelation to reason.”⁷¹ The nature of these responses not only demonstrates this trend but also suggests that, since Didyma was capable of dealing with these issues, more people would come to consult Apollo there. Questions concerning theological issues are not typical of Delphic responses.

There is, however, one response alluding to these matters which has been attributed to Delphi by several modern scholars.⁷² The Neoplatonist Amelios asked a question concerning the whereabouts of Plotinus’ soul, clearly a theological concept. The reasoning behind the classification of this oracle as Delphic lies largely in the fact that the text is placed in parallel with two other explicitly Delphic oracles (the one given to the Lydians about Croesus and the oracle that declared Socrates the wisest of all) within Porphyry’s *Vita Plotini*.⁷³ Athanassiadi argues that the priests at Delphi “were fully aware of all the latest developments in philosophy and, in the quarrel between noetic and theurgic Neoplatonism...”⁷⁴ Indeed, in the second and third centuries AD, there were philosophers serving as prophets at Delphi – Platonists, Stoics, Epicureans, and perhaps even a Pythagorean – which indicates that the sanctuary was a

philosophical center.⁷⁵ However, the lack of oracular responses from Delphi dealing in these issues suggests that the Delphic oracle did not hold the position of authority that the oracles of Asia Minor did, but was instead a place for philosophers to visit and spread their own knowledge. Goulet offers an alternative suggestion, that the oracle concerning Plotinus' soul did not arise from any oracular sanctuary at all, but was rather the work of a private diviner – an idea which has been rejected by many modern scholars.⁷⁶ The text clearly suggests that Apollo, not a private diviner, was consulted.

Here we follow the argument of Fontenrose (and others) who suggests the oracle is not Delphic. He cites several reasons why Asia Minor is a more likely source for this oracle. First, since the sanctuary was not specified, he maintains that it was, instead, issued at an oracle of Apollo in Asia Minor.⁷⁷ Also, the Neoplatonic language is uncharacteristic, particularly considering the use of the word *ψυχή* is not found anywhere else within the Delphic corpus. Simply because the oracle was mentioned alongside two explicitly Delphic oracles, he concludes that there is not enough internal evidence from the text that would prove that the oracle was issued at Delphi. Busine adds to his argument by noting that the length of the response also causes suspicion: at 51 verses, it is the longest in the Delphic corpus, more like oracles from Asia Minor which would sometimes issue oracles as long as 30 lines.⁷⁸ Apollo was certainly consulted and the combination of this evidence, particularly the theme of the oracle, suggests that it was rather an oracle of Apollo in Asia Minor than one from Delphi. The final supporting evidence which points to Didyma as the source for this oracle is that Porphyry collected many oracles from Didyma in his compilation, *De Philosophia ex Oraculis*.⁷⁹ Although this alone does not testify to the Asiatic origin of the oracle, since Delphi was not explicitly mentioned, combined with the “theological” nature of other extant Didymaeian oracles, this response can be considered an oracle from Asia Minor.

However, one other response from Delphi hints at the theological aspects of responses from Didyma and Claros. When the Emperor Augustus consulted the Pythia in AD 12 about his concern for the succession, the Pythia did not respond. Augustus then inquired why the oracle was silent and received the response: “A Hebrew boy, a god who rules among the blessed, bids me leave this house and go back to Hades. So go in silence from my altars.”⁸⁰ This is seen as the oracle predicting the coming of Christ, but it must be remembered that Augustus did not initially inquire about Christ, or Christianity, but rather, was told about it at the oracle's directive. The information proved to be theological like the other oracles, but the topic was not initiated by the consultant. Additionally, Wolff claims that this oracle is a Christian forgery, and several other modern scholars agree.⁸¹ Since the issue of authenticity is not at issue here, although it is likely that this response was fabricated to uphold the supremacy of Christianity, it does not detract from the argument. Indeed, if the oracle was invented, that further supports the hypothesis that Delphi was not consulted regarding religious sentiments besides those of traditional Greek religion.

Oracles invented by Christians must be viewed with suspicion as their motive is to discredit the god and show the superiority of Christianity. In this way, the oracle could be manipulated to serve the proselytizing motive of the author. This is particularly clear when the writings of Eusebius, whose work *Praeparatio Evangelica* has several references to oracular divination, are examined. His purpose was to promote Christianity and prove its superiority over paganism, by educating Christians in the supremacy of their faith and the error of polytheism. To do this he quotes both Christian and Greek sources and focuses, in particular, on sacrifice and divination from oracles. This suggests either it is Eusebius' easiest target, or perhaps more likely, his biggest opponent. It is clear that his writings have a pro-Christian bias, and this causes inconsistencies in his work. At one point, Eusebius claims that the oracle of Delphi is "silent," whereas later in the work he contradicts himself by claiming that Delphi, Didyma, and Claros are the only oracles still operating.⁸² In this way, the bias of every source must be appreciated, particularly that of the harsh critics such as the Christian apologists. However, since Eusebius quotes non-Christian sources directly, his argument holds additional validity. His purpose, to demonstrate the superiority of Christianity, would have no effect on a non-Christian audience if the sentiments were fabricated.

Although Delphic officials were aware of the religious and psychological climate of the day, people were not seeking advice in these matters from the oracle there. This is seen not only in Plutarch's works in which he praises the oracle's change from hexameter to prose, proof that the oracle adapted and changed with the times, but also that Delphi was a philosophical "hot spot" where various philosophers congregated. Price has noted, for instance, that "none of the officials of the oracle (at Delphi) had any specialized theological training and one should not picture the oracle as a positive source of progressive theological or political doctrines which showed the way to the other Greeks. Delphi was indeed regarded as a source of authority, but it was there to be consulted, not to lead."⁸³ However, it seems that it was precisely this role that Didyma and Claros assumed.

There are additional hints of these philosophical trends at Delphi, as Plutarch notes:

That the god is no less a philosopher than a prophet Ammonius seemed to all to postulate and prove correctly, with reference to this or to that one of his several titles ; that he is the 'Pythian' (*Inquirer*) for those that are beginning to learn and inquire; the 'Delian' (*Clear*) and the 'Phanaean' (*Disclosing*) for those to whom some part of the truth is becoming clear and is being disclosed; the 'Ismenian' (*Knowing*) for those who have knowledge; and the 'Leschenorian' (*Conversationalist*) when people have active enjoyment of conversation and philosophic intercourse with one another. 'Since,' he went on to say, 'inquiry is the beginning of philosophy, and wonder and uncertainty the beginning of inquiry, it seems only natural that the greater part of what concerns the god should be concealed in

riddles, and should call for some account of the wherefore and an explanation of its cause.⁸⁴

This does not solely refer to Apollo at Delphi. Many of his other epithets are mentioned, suggesting that Plutarch was alluding to the god's nature in general, rather than specifically his role at Delphi. While there are hints of these philosophical trends occurring at Delphi, it is hardly evident to the degree that it is at Didyma.

This theological aspect of the responses might be a reason Didyma thrived during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The changing religious climate, caused by population influxes and cultural exchanges, seen also in the rise of magic, astrology, and Mystery cults, as well as new philosophies such as Gnosticism and Neoplatonism, is apparent in several sources, and Didyma was seen as a resource for answers. The oracle developed along with these changing ideas and was, therefore, more suited than Delphi to deal with the questions. Claros, too, may have benefitted from the theological tendency of the times, a consideration to which we now turn.

Notes

- 1 Lactant. *Div. inst.* 1.7.1. K. Heineman trans.
- 2 Lactant. *Div. inst.* 1.21; his work was written in reply to attacks on Christianity under Diocletian and Constantine.
- 3 Plut. *De def. or.* 411e–f, “οὐδέν’ ἔφη ‘δεῖ περὶ τῶν ἐπεὶ πυνθάνεσθαι καὶ διαπορεῖν τὴν ἐνταῦθα τῶν χρηστηρίων ἀμαύρωσιν, μᾶλλον δὲ πλὴν ἐνός ἢ δυεῖν ἀπάντων ἐκλειψιν ὀρώντας: ἀλλ’ ἐκεῖνο σκοπεῖν, δι’ ἣν αἰτίαν οὕτως ἐξησθένηκε.” F. Cole Babbitt trans.
- 4 Nock (1928), pp. 281–288.
- 5 Athanassiadi (1989), p. 217. See also Maximus of Tyre (14.1); Porphyry (*Epistle Ad Anebo* 14); Iamblichus (*Myst.* 3.11); Macrobius (*Sat.* 1.18.1); Parke (1985).
- 6 Parke (1985) p. 73 for Didyma and Robert (1954), pp. 3–29 for Claros.
- 7 Polyb. 36.17; Paus. 8.33.2–3. See also Davies (1984) and Alcock (1993).
- 8 See Morgan (1990).
- 9 See Dignas (2005) and Mitchell (2005).
- 10 Dignas (2005), p. 211; see also Strabo 14.1.5.
- 11 *Res Gestae* 24.1.
- 12 Alcock (1993), p. 24 and (2002), pp. 40–98. See also Hopkins (1980).
- 13 Rigsby (2010), pp. 155–157. A response concerning the Didymaeon contests is attested in an inscription from Cos, SIG 590, see Thonemann (2007). Around 200 BC, the festival became quadrennial.
- 14 Fontenrose (1988), pp. 20–27.
- 15 Gruen (1984), p. 548. Miletus joined the Roman cause before the battle of Magnesia (190 BC) against Antiochus III. Or perhaps like other cities, Miletus had serious complaints about the Seleucid rule (see Livy 35.17.1–2). Or perhaps, an alliance with Rome was attractive because, if victorious, Miletus could expect an increase in territory.
- 16 Price (1984), p. 138.
- 17 Athanassiadi (1989), p. 272. See also *Did.* II 332.
- 18 Athanassiadi (1992), p. 50.
- 19 *FGrH* 124 F14, cited in Strabo 17.1.43. For possible reasons why divination returned at this time, see Morgan (1989) and Price (1984).

- 20 Dio Cass. 59.28.1 says he wanted to use the temple to celebrate his own divinity; Caligula also wanted to put a roof on the temple, since this had been considered an impossible engineering feat (Strabo 14.1.5). See also Suet. *Calig.* 21.
- 21 Iambl. *Myst.* 3.11.127, “Καὶ μὴν ἢ γε ἐν Βραγχίδαϊς γυνὴ χρησιμωδός, εἴτε ῥάβδον ἔχουσα τὴν πρῶτως ὑπὸ θεοῦ τινος παραδοθεῖσαν πληροῦται τῆς θείας αὐγῆς, εἴτε ἐπὶ ἄξονος καθημένη προλέγει τὸ μέλλον, εἴτε τοὺς πόδας ἢ κράσπεδόν τι τέγγουσα τῷ ὕδατι ἢ ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος ἀμιζομένη δέχεται τὸν θεόν, ἐξ ἀπάντων τούτων ἐπιτηδεῖα παρασκευαζομένη πρὸς τὴν ὑποδοχὴν ἐξῴθεν αὐτοῦ μεταλαμβάνει.” A. Wilder trans.
- 22 Lane Fox (1987), pp. 182–183.
- 23 Addey (2007), p. 83.
- 24 Busine (2002); Addey (2007) also reinforces this point.
- 25 Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.70.
- 26 Montegu (1976), p. 304. See *Didyma* 84, 86, 87, 93, 111.
- 27 Indeed, the inscriptional record also reinforces the practice of Mystery initiation at Didyma; see Busine (2006), p. 284; *I.Didyma* 312, 1.24; 326.1.5–6; 327, 1.4; 329, 1.6; 333, 1.5; 382, 1.5. Fontenrose (1988), p. 128 notes at Didyma, Mysteries were frequently connected with the *hydrophoros* of Artemis Pythie, which is the highest position for a woman at Didyma; Graf (2003), p. 246–247 also notes the inscriptional evidence for Mystery Cult at both Didyma and Claros.
- 28 Fontenrose (1988), p. 17. See R5, R6 as compiled by him; compare to the response extant from literary sources, dating to 331 BC.
- 29 Robinson, (1991), p. 61. See also Busine (2006) for a summary of the conflicting notions concerning the roles of Didymaeian officials.
- 30 *I.Didyma* 82 B; Busine (2006), p. 281. This mention of a priest at Didyma has spurred a scholarly debate; Rhem (1958), p. 113 proposes that it was used instead of priest for metrical purposes. However, Fontenrose (1988), p. 118, and the agreement of Busine (2006), p. 281 is more compelling; the inscription refers not to the existence of a priest at Didyma, but rather a cult of Apollo Didymaeus at Mylasa.
- 31 See Fontenrose (1988), R17–31; 33; 44; 55; 56; A3–10; B3–4. All figures are rounded to the nearest percent.
- 32 Athanassiadi (1989), p. 272.
- 33 Fontenrose (1988), pp. 227–228. He cites Theodor. *Hist. eccl.* 3.16.21 which does not mention Didyma directly, only Delphi and Dodona by name and includes the rest as “other oracles.” Fontenrose argues that since Julian held office of prophet at Didyma (Jul. *Epist.* 451bc), Didyma was certainly among these unnamed oracles, “we may suspect that *Dódônên* is a copyist’s mistake for *Didyma*, since otherwise Dodona is not mentioned as operative after 200 BC.”
- 34 Parke (1986), p. 123.
- 35 Fontenrose (1988), pp. 55–56, Lane Fox (1987), p. 182 contrasts the forms at Didyma with those at Claros; the latter also used hexameter, but the priest also “broke into iambs or more complex metrical forms.”
- 36 Scott (2010), pp. 120–124. Although they did make some additions at Delphi, such as the institution of the *naopoioi*, who oversaw the finances of the rebuilding, there was no break in traditional practice of administration or oracular procedure.
- 37 Fontenrose (1988), p. 216 R43. See also Diod. Sic. 19.90.4. Seleucus took this oracle seriously as he built a palace for Daphne near Antioch.
- 38 Sozomen, *Hist. eccl.* 1.7.73.
- 39 See *DI* 129 and *DI* 132.2–7 respectively.
- 40 The Chaldean Oracles, which were written under the reign of Marcus Aurelius, also represent this return to verse form. Athanassiadi (1999) suggests that the revival in oracular verse may have inspired the theurgic verses of the Chaldean Oracles.
- 41 Nock (1928), pp. 281–288 adapted the term from Boulanger. See also Robert (1968).

- 42 Maximus of Tyre, *Dissertationes* 11.5a–b, “Ἐν τοσούτῳ δὴ πολέμῳ καὶ στάσει καὶ διαφωνίᾳ ἓνα ἴδοις ἂν ἐν πάσῃ γῇ ὁμόφωνον νόμον καὶ λόγον, ὅτι θεὸς εἷς πάντων βασιλεὺς, καὶ πατήρ, καὶ θεοὶ πολλοί, θεοῦ παῖδες, συνάρχοντες θεοῦ.” M.B. Trapp trans.
- 43 Maximus of Tyre, *Dissertationes* 39.5.
- 44 A list of the various gods is found in Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 2.34; see also Paus. 1.17.1; Plin. *HN* 2.22. This is not necessarily a new phenomenon, but the tendency does seem to increase in the second century AD. For a discussion on the identification of “Gods” in the Greco-Roman world, see Axtell (1987) and Rives (2007).
- 45 Mikalson (2006), pp. 211–212.
- 46 Lloyd (1990).
- 47 Lactant. *Div. inst.* 4.13.11, “θνητὸς ἦν κατὰ σάρκα, σοφὸς τερατώδεσιν ἔργοις, ἀλλ’ ὑπὸ Χαλδαίοισι δικασπολίοιαισιν ἀλωκώς, γομφωθείς σκολόπεσσι πικρὴν ἀνέπληψε τελευτήν.” A. Bowen trans.
- 48 Lactant. *Div. inst.* 4.11.12. It appears that Jesus, as divine, was assumed knowledge of Lactantius’ audience.
- 49 Lactant. *Div. inst.* 4.13.17, “*Quid mirum, si hoc Apollo veritatem ignorantibus persuasit...*”
- 50 Fontenrose (1988), p. 222.
- 51 Digeser (2000), p. 102; see Augustine *De civ. D.* 19.23. “*Forte magis poteris in aqua impressis litteris scribere aut adinflans leves pinnas per aera avis volare, quam pollutae revoces impiae uxoris sensum. Pergat quo modo vult inanibus fallaciis perseverans et lamentari fallacis mortuum deum cantans, quem iudicibus recta sentientibus perdictum pessima in speciosis ferro vincta mors interfecit.*” G.E. McCracken trans. See also Lactant. *Div. inst.* 4.13.11.
- 52 Digeser (2000), p. 166 n. 66.
- 53 At least one of the oracles quoted in Lactantius (*Div. inst.* 1.7.1) is also found in the inscriptional record in the cities which consulted Claros; there is little reason to doubt he would be faithful to Didyma as well. See Erbse (1941), p. 169. For the inscription, see Bean (1971), pp. 20–22 no. 37; Robert (1971), pp. 597–619; Lane Fox (1987), pp. 169–171.
- 54 Johnson (1958) stresses the importance of Anatolia during the emergence of Christianity. Many of the cities which sent embassies to Didyma and Claros were among those with strong evidence of both Jewish and Christian populations.
- 55 Trebilco (1991), p. 145.
- 56 Lactant. *De. mort. pers.* 11.212–213 and Eusebius’ *Vita Constantini* 2.50. See also Fontenrose (1988), R33, p. 206.
- 57 Grégoire (1913). Fontenrose (1988), p. 207 argues that his reconstruction of the text is highly conjectural, but is still possible.
- 58 Lactant. *De ira dei*, 23, see also Fontenrose (1988), R51, pp. 223–225.
- 59 Augustine, *De civ. D.* 19.23C, citing Porphyry.
- 60 Digeser (1998), pp. 129–146 argues that “both Porphyry and Lactantius...depend heavily on oracles as evidence for the ‘truth’ of their position,” and that “Lactantius’ own use of oracles appears to take seriously Porphyry’s reliance on oracular testimony.” So, in a sense, Lactantius’ *Divinae Institutiones* is a response to Porphyry’s *De Philosophia ex Oraculis Haurienda*. Pricoco (1987), suggests that Lactantius only partly relies on the same sources as Porphyry, and partly on a collection of oracles already in circulation at this time. In either case, it seems that Lactantius did not “invent” these oracles to serve his Christian bias, but used already extant oracles which supported his case.
- 61 Lactant. *Div. inst.* 7.13.6, “Ψυχὴ μὲν, μέχρις οὗ δεσμοῖς πρὸς σῶμα κρατεῖται φθαρτὰ νοοῦσα πάθῃ θνηταῖς ἀληθόσιν εἰκεῖ· ἡνίκα δ’ αὐτὴ λύσιν βροτέην μετὰ σῶμα μαρανθὲν ὠκίστην εὐρηται, ἐς αἰθέρα πᾶσα φορεῖται αἰὲν ἀγήραος οὖσα, μένει δ’ εἰς πᾶμπαν ἀτειρής. πρωτόγονος γάρ τοῦτο θεοῦ διέταξε πρόνοια.” J. Fontenrose trans.

- 62 Pricoco (1988). The concept of transmigration of the soul is found as early as Pythagoras. The Platonists, Neoplatonists, Christians, and Jews all adopted notions regarding the fate of the soul after death, which gradually influenced the whole of society. Earlier Greek sentiments regarding the salvation of the soul through purity were also common. See Dodds (1951), p. 154.
- 63 Pricoco (1988), p. 188. Fontenrose (1988), p. 225 allows for the possibility that this oracle was known to Porphyry.
- 64 Robert (1968), p. 590.
- 65 Mitchell (1999), p. 86. See also Erbse (1995), *Theos.* 1–7.
- 66 Pricoco (1988), pp. 195–201. See also Erbse (1941), *Theos.* 37.
- 67 See Busine (2005b).
- 68 Busine (2005b), p. 7.
- 69 Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* 8.31. “ἀθάνατος ψυχὴ καὶ χρῆμα σόν, ἀλλὰ προνοίας, ἢ μετὰ σῶμα μαρνανθέν, ἅτ’ ἐκ δεσμῶν θεὸς ὑπὸς, ῥηιδίως προθοροῦσα κεράννυται ἡέρι κόυφω δεινὴν καὶ πολὺτλητον ἀποστέρξασα λατρείην: σοὶ δὲ τί τῶνδ’ ὄφελος, ὃ ποτ’ οὐκέτ’ ἐὼν τότε δόξεις; ἢ τί μετὰ ζωοῖσιν ἐὼν περὶ τῶνδε ματεύεις,” F.C. Conybeare trans.
- 70 Iambl. *Myst.* 1.15. This will be dealt with in detail in Chapter 7.
- 71 Lane Fox (1987), p. 196. See also Dodds (1951), pp. 289–295.
- 72 P&W, p. 409, R473 suggest that the reference to another response from Apollo prove it to be from Delphi. For agreements, see Nilsson (1974) and Athanassiadi (1989). See below for alternative suggestions.
- 73 Porphy. *Plot.* 22.6–7; 22.1.
- 74 Athanassiadi (1989), p. 275.
- 75 Lane Fox (1987), p. 197. See I. *Did.* 100, 150, 310, 285 for examples.
- 76 Goulet (1982). Contra, see Busine (2005a), pp. 305–313.
- 77 Fontenrose (1978), H69 points out that the specific shrine was never mentioned thus could have been Apollo’s oracle in Asia Minor, pp. 191–192 and 265. This is agreed upon by Brisson (1990) and Busine (2005a).
- 78 Busine (2005a), p. 307. Cat 1: 28 verses; Cat. 7: 22 verses; Cat 8: 30 verses; Cat. 10: 31 verses. She also points out that the reason Amelios consulted the god can be found to have matches in oracular literature of the time and, particularly as we have seen, from oracles of Asia Minor; Busine (2005a), p. 309. See *SEG* 17 (1960), no. 319 (Cat. 5). Granted, this oracle is from Cyrenaica on the coast of Libya, but it still demonstrates the motive to consult gods in this matter, which has strong parallels in Asia Minor.
- 79 Busine (2005a), p. 253.
- 80 Georgius Cedrenus (1838), *Ioannis Scylitzae ope*, Vol. 1. Bekker ed., p. 320, “Παῖς Ἑβραῖος κέλεται με θεὸς μακάρεσσιν ἀνάσσω, τόνδε δόμον προλεῖν καὶ Αἴδος αἰθῆς ἰκέσθαι, λοιπὸν ἄπιθι ἐκ πρόμων ἡμετέρων.” J. Fontenrose trans.
- 81 Wolff (1962), p. 230. See also Nock (1928), Levin (1989), and Beatrice (1997).
- 82 Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 4.2.8; Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 5.16, although quoting Porphyry, it still leads to a contradiction. The evidence suggests that this latter statement is indeed true. However, it must be noted, that “silent” could have a range of potential meanings.
- 83 Price (1985), p. 143.
- 84 Plut. *De E* 385b–c, “ὅτι μὲν γὰρ οὐχ ἦττον ὁ θεὸς φιλόσοφος ἢ μάντις, ἐδόκει πᾶσιν ὀρθῶς πρὸς τοῦτο τῶν ὀνομάτων ἕκαστον Ἀμμώνιος τίθεσθαι καὶ διδάσκειν, ὡς Πύθιος μὲν ἐστὶ τοῖς ἀρχομένοις μανθάνειν καὶ διαπυνθάνεσθαι: Δῆλιος δὲ καὶ Φαναῖος οἷς ἤδη τι δηλοῦται καὶ ὑποφαίνεται τῆς ἀληθείας: Ἰσμήνιος δὲ τοῖς ἐχούσι τὴν ἐπιστήμην, καὶ Λεσχηγόριος ὅταν ἐνεργῶσι καὶ ἀπολαύωσι χρόμειοι τῷ διαλέγεσθαι καὶ φιλοσοφεῖν πρὸς ἀλλήλους. ‘ἐπεὶ δὲ τοῦ φιλοσοφεῖν’ ἔφη ‘τὸ ζητεῖν τὸ : θαυμάζειν καὶ ἀπορεῖν, εἰκότως τὰ πολλὰ τῶν περὶ τὸν θεὸν ἔοικεν αἰνίγμασι κατακεκρύφθαι, καὶ λόγον τινὰ ποθοῦντα διὰ τί καὶ διδασκαλίαν τῆς αἰτίας.’” F. Cole Babbitt trans.

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5 Theological oracles from Claros

τρὶς μάκαρες κείνοι καὶ τετράκις ἄνδρες ἔσονται,
οἱ Πάγον οἰκήσουσι πέραν ἱεροῖο Μέλητος.

Three, yes, four times blessed will those men be
Who will live in Pagus beyond the sacred Meles.¹

This, the earliest attested oracle from Claros, dates to 334 BC when Apollo was consulted concerning the re-foundation of Smyrna. Sadly, since Claros accounts for less of the evidence in the ancient literature than some other oracles, it is harder to reconstruct the history of the site. Claros is not mentioned by Homer, but it is in the Homeric *Hymn to Artemis*.² It is not mentioned by Herodotus as one of the oracles tested by Croesus, a notable omission as Herodotus was from Halicarnassus and Croesus was from Lydia and the proximity to Claros would suggest a possible inclusion. Pausanias tells us that the oracle was founded in remote antiquity, but it was not until the Imperial period that Claros gained great stature in Asia Minor.

This chapter will examine the success of the oracle of Claros in Asia Minor; like at Didyma, Claros flourished in the second and third centuries AD. Although Roman patronage and geographic location help explain this success, I argue one significant reason for this prosperity is because the theological oracles issued at the site better suit the clientele of the time. Here, I will examine the sanctuary and method of consultation before examining the theological oracles to better understand the disparity in success between Delphi and the oracles of Asia Minor during this period.

Like at Didyma, Roman patronage also contributed to Claros' prosperity. Early in the second century BC, Rome granted the title of *asylia* to Claros, thus confirming the inviolability of the city and the sanctuary.³ In 133 BC, the kingdom of Pergamum was bequeathed to Rome and it included Colophon and the oracle of Claros.⁴ The Attalid kings of Pergamum were some of the most distinguished consultants at Claros. Rome inherited the Attalid kingdom and along with it the Attalid devotion to the oracle. At least 13 inscriptions honoring Roman emperors have been found at Claros; 10 of them are found on monuments along the Sacred Way. Those honored include L. Valerius

Flaccus, Pompey, Cicero, and Octavian; in fact the inscription mentioning Octavian was found within Apollo's temple at Claros and was likely erected shortly after his victory at Actium (31 BC).⁵ The many statues of Roman emperors found at the site attest the interest held by Rome, particularly in the cases of Hadrian and Tiberius.⁶ Inscriptions that dedicate the temple to Apollo at Claros were found with Hadrian's name in the nominative case, demonstrating his influence there.⁷ Hadrian is known to have supported oracles, and during his reign Delphi saw a short-lived revival via his patronage, as we saw in Chapter 2. However, the surge in popularity should not be attributed to Hadrian's patronage alone, as Delphi would also have sustained oracular popularity with his help.

Claros: the sanctuary and oracular procedure

It is ironic that Claros' early history is so obscure yet, in the late first and early second century AD, the most detailed extant account of oracular operation is found in Tacitus. While on a grand tour of Greece, a typical event after gaining office, Germanicus stopped at Colophon, specifically to consult the oracle. Tacitus describes the operation of the oracle while discussing Germanicus' visit to the sanctuary:

There, it is not a woman, as at Delphi, but a priest chosen from certain families, generally from Miletus, who ascertains simply the number and the names of the applicants. Then descending into a cave and drinking a draught from a secret spring, the man, who is commonly ignorant of letters and of poetry, utters a response in verse answering to the thoughts conceived in the mind of any inquirer.⁸

There are both similarities and differences between the operations at Delphi and Claros. There is the striking parallel of the spring, like the Castalian, a familiar feature at Delphi. The spring is particularly important at Claros; as Iamblichus says: "It is acknowledged by everyone that the oracle at Colophon gives its responses through the medium of water," and continues by noting that the oracle only works on certain appointed nights, after sacrifices have been made.⁹ The priest gives oracles but the consultant never sees the prophet for he is in his underground *adyton*, in which the spring is located.¹⁰ The practice of allotting certain auspicious days to consult the oracles seems to be a trend most oracles share. These practices, although distinct from Delphi, also have many strong ties and this could either demonstrate the universality of oracular procedure at Apolline oracles or the possibility that Delphi was used as a model for Claros' operations. As evidence for the latter, Claros had an *omphalos*, "like Delphi, and it was kept in the outer room reserved for the priesthood."¹¹ It is noteworthy that a man was selected as the prophet rather than a woman, as was the case at the oracular shrines of Apollo at Delphi and Didyma. This suggests that, contrary to the reorganization of Didyma, Claros may not have used Delphi as a model for oracular procedure.

Although a temple of the Hellenistic style, that at Claros was finished during the reign of Hadrian.¹² As in the case at Didyma, it seems that the construction of the temple at Claros was connected to the method of consultation. The layout of the temple is unique: there is an underground portion of the temple where the *adyton* and oracle were located. To enter, one must navigate through one of two steep, narrow corridors, which begin on either side of the *pronaos*, reminiscent of Didyma. These passageways are a maze of right-angle turns that meet under the temple and then divide again to reconnect beneath the *cella* from opposite sides.¹³ Within the *cella*, there were benches and an *omphalos*; beyond these features was a doorway to yet another chamber which contained a well. The well provided water which was used to assist in divine prophecy. It is worth noting that an underground chamber at Claros, mentioned by Iamblichus, is verified by archeological evidence.¹⁴

This strange construction is reminiscent of Mystery cults. Busine suggests that the layout of the temple at Claros, with an underground labyrinth leading to the *adyton*, gives the impression of mysteries and the practice of “crossing the threshold” into initiation.¹⁵ Indeed, some inscriptions at Claros record Mystery rites for consultants which were connected with oracular procedure – the use of the phrase οἱτινες μυηθέντες ἐνεβάτευσαν (“the initiate steps in”) suggests the context of initiation and Mystery cults.¹⁶ Macridy has compiled all of them, many of which date to the second century AD.¹⁷ Another mysterious aspect of oracular consultation at Claros is, as noted above, the issuing of oracles at night, something which is unique among the oracular centers discussed here. These Mystery connotations, combined with the construction of the temple, as well as the nature of the oracular responses, as we shall see, show that Claros exhibited a unique talent of maintaining the “power and attractiveness of the mantic process for the society it served.”¹⁸ This society was greatly concerned with transmundane matters, the afterlife, and other personal theological necessities; Claros’ incorporation of several aspects of Mystery cult practice demonstrates the oracle’s breadth of specialization and ability to satisfy a variety of community and individual needs.

In addition to this, Claros introduced a new and sophisticated method of prophecy which has parallels with the reorganization of Didyma. Around AD 130 a change in the inscriptional record is seen at Claros. Before then a prophet alone, or priest and prophet, were honored as cult officials, then the recordings of an office of *thespiode* (θεσπιδός), “singer of prophecies,” appeared and became a standard position, seemingly held for life.¹⁹ Changes in epigraphic practice may account for this evidence, however, it is noticeable that it is contemporary with the completion of the temple, and suggests that it could be a new position.²⁰ This addition of “vocational” religious officials at Claros would surely have added to the prestige of the site. It demonstrates Claros’ ability to adapt to changing concerns of the patrons, something which is essential to understanding the success of the oracles of Asia Minor.

As opposed to other sanctuaries, where a priest or magistrate held office for only one year, the office of *thespiode* was held for an extended period of time:

for example, Gn. Julius Reginus Alexander was *thespiode* for 25 years, c. AD 150–175. This allowed ample time for policies to be instated due to the stability of the office.²¹ Deliberate policies could be enacted due to the duration of time each office was held. To further demonstrate the constancy of office, his successor, Tiberius Claudius Ardys, served from c. AD 175–190. Also, if the *thespiode* did play a significant role in oracular procedure, this extended office would allow for the professionalization and skill which comes with decades of practice.

The exact function of these religious officials is uncertain and much debated. Inscriptional evidence generally records three consistent vocations: a priest (ἱερεὺς), the *thespiodos*, and the prophet (προφήτης).²² Both Parke and Lane Fox agree that it was the prophet who drank the sacred water and produced the oracles of Apollo, the priest oversaw the operations of the sanctuary, and the *thespiodos* sang the oracles given by the prophet, and turned them into verse.²³ Alternatively, Robert, the leading excavator at Claros, argues that it was the *thespiodos* who drank sacred water and the prophet who versified the oracles afterwards.²⁴ These assertions cannot be verified from our meagre evidence and remain speculative. Particularly concerning is the ancient authors' lack of precision with regard to the terms they used. For instance, Porphyry claims that it was a priest (ἱερεὺς) who drank the water at Claros and issued the prophecy, whereas Iamblichus claims it was the prophet (προφήτης).²⁵ The former argument seems more likely, considering that the *thespiodos* seems to be a *new* religious official at Claros beginning in c. AD 130, and this leads to the assumption that the prophecies continued to be issued by the prophet and simply sung by the new official. As the sanctuary gained popularity and prominence, additional roles needed to be created to meet the needs of the sanctuary. These new officials reflect a flourishing at Claros, and, in the first centuries AD, Claros was mentioned alongside Didyma as the most renowned oracles of Asia Minor.²⁶ Inscriptions also attest the wealth of Claros. For many years, Apollo was chief magistrate, or *prytanis* (πρύτανις), at the sanctuary, and this means that the financial responsibilities, such as sacrifice and expenses connected with festivals, were the responsibility of the god himself.²⁷ Apollo (i.e. the temple at Claros) had enough wealth to support itself and was not reliant on other forms of donation and benefaction. In fact, an uninterrupted succession of *prytanis* of Apollo dates until AD 234/5.²⁸

One of the reasons Claros experienced such success during this time is because the sanctuary did not compete with Delphi, or other oracles, for patrons. By the second and third centuries AD, there are inscriptions referencing several delegations which came to consult Apollo at Claros from Phocaea, Parion, Heracleia of the Salbake in Caria, Phrygian Laodicea, Acmonia, and Cydonia.²⁹ None of these delegates sent to Claros to consult the god came from cities on mainland Greece or the coast of Asia Minor which had traditions of consulting oracles. Rather, the site drew most of its clientele from newly Hellenized cities in the interior of Asia Minor and Macedonia.³⁰ For example, an inscription from Nicomedia in Bithynia, now lost, was copied in 1714 by

Lucas. This oracle addresses a magistrate from Nicomedia, advising him: "For an earth-warming abundance of produce, O magistrate, I urge you to honor the lord of the seasons who saves by his fire..."³¹ This is most likely a response concerning a harvest. Another oracle given to Ephesus and Smyrna, regarding an earthquake, claims that Claros was the "leading oracle of Asia."³² Various other oracles concern cities in Asia Minor such as Hierapolis, Pergamum, Callipolis, and Caesarea Trocetta.³³ This trend was enhanced by the road network, established by the Romans in Asia Minor, which guided pilgrims on a path to Claros on the Via Sebaste, which seems to have been built in 6 BC by Augustus. It allowed easier access to the oracle from the interior of Asia Minor, particularly from the confines of Central Anatolia to the Maeander Valley which led to Ephesus and finally Colophon.³⁴

Claros also enhanced its popularity abroad with what appears to be an active marketing effort. Six nearly identical inscriptions have been found throughout the western empire, in Sardinia, Dalmatia, Numidia, Britain, and two cities in Morocco, Volubilis and Banasa. The text of these reads: *Dis deabusque secundum interpretationem oraculi Clari Apollinis* ("To the gods and goddesses according to the interpretation of the oracle of Clarian Apollo"). The only significant differences between the inscriptions are that the one from Dalmatia omits the term *oraculi*, and the inscription of Housesteads in Britain adds the mention of *coh(ors) I Tungorum*. This noteworthy series of inscriptions is dedicated to the gods and goddesses at the behest of Claros whose fame and influence stretched all the way to the extremities of the empire. The dates of these inscriptions have been contested, and the differences in dating have led to differences in interpretation. It seems that the likely date of the texts is the second to mid-third century AD. The inscription from Britain must be dated to AD 140, at the earliest, based on the movements of a Tungrian cohort who placed the text in Housesteads fort on Hadrian's Wall. It seems a late second, early third century date is the most likely and this places these oracles firmly within the time of Claros' most syncretistic and theological operation.

The inscriptions have fascinated scholars, rightly, and have spurred several different theories as to the nature of these texts. Friedländer suggests that they were possibly a simultaneous consultation by several soldiers from different provinces who visited Claros together.³⁵ Nock takes a different approach, offering the possibility that the inscriptions are a corpus of oracles, a sort of formula for honoring the gods. This, he says, was something which was in line with the unification of various divinities seen as manifestations of one Supreme Being.³⁶ Nilsson emphasizes the importance of the word *interpretatio*, which, he argues, is a quintessential enhancement of the rest of the theological oracles from Claros.³⁷ Interpretation is an essential aspect of Greek oracles and by including this word the oracle is directing some sort of personal reflection which is essential to the theological oracles. Robert seems to agree, stating that the inscriptions are a form of religious propaganda, promoting the theological and syncretistic nature of the oracular responses from Claros, which we will soon examine.³⁸ Parke, following Birley, argues that only a person in a position

of extreme power could publicize the oracle all over the empire, and he suggests Emperor Caracalla as the likely candidate as he visited Claros in AD 214.³⁹ Finally, Veyne suggests that this set of inscriptions reflects a more common trend of the time, supported by Claros, in which *all* gods should be honored, rather than individual gods.⁴⁰

It is possible that these oracles may have some link to the influence of Mithras and other soldiers' cults. This theory, in a sense, incorporates many of the previous notions, or, at least, it does not exclude them. The role of the soldier is included to account for the Cohors, the syncretism of Claros is still seen from what the oracle says, and the general trend of religious henotheism is maintained. As the inscriptions were found at the extremities of the empire, it is likely that they were brought by soldiers (or indeed any travelers), who probably came from Asia Minor near Claros. Soldiers brought with them their gods in order to maintain honor for them throughout their travels. This practice is reminiscent of the cult of Mithras, a mystery cult taken all over the empire by Roman soldiers, and evidenced by the dozens of Mithraea found throughout the empire, as far as Germany, Britain, and Spain. The oracular inscriptions which mention Claros have a precise parallel with the cult of Iuppiter Dolichenus, also popular amongst soldiers. Speidel records many corporate inscriptions which are found honoring the god with strikingly similar language. Several inscriptions include the phrase *In honorem domus divinae Iovi optimo maximo Dolicheno* ("In honor of the greatest divine house of Jupiter Doliche") with various alterations and additions thereto.⁴¹ These largely uniform inscriptions are found in Lambaesis in Numidia and several derive from Upper Germany.⁴² They demonstrate the proclivity of Roman soldiers to honor their god with inscriptions wherever they travel and those from Claros could have been practicing the same type of homage. So although the inscriptions from Claros demonstrate the reach of the oracle's influence, it may not be a unique method of worship.

Whatever the nature of these inscriptions, the span which Claros' oracles reached is surely an attestation of its fame and prestige. Perhaps it was this propagation of the religious specialization that helped Claros to gain fame while Delphi's popularity diminished – the oracle's association with these new occult questions would have drawn interested clients to Claros. Not only was the Clarian Apollo consulted by individuals and states alike, but the consultations were significant enough to be spread throughout the Empire.

The oracles themselves also attest deliberate policy which aided in the propagation of Claros' popularity. For example, the oracle given to Hierapolis, when it consulted Claros because of fears of plague, associated Apollo Clarios with Apollo Careios who was the god of the oracle at Hierapolis.⁴³ Apollo Clarios complained that no honors were received from Hierapolis, and to assist in the efforts to eradicate the plague, they would need to erect a statue of Apollo Clarios at the front gates of the city. Additionally, Apollo directed them to send choirs and maidens to Colophon to sing hymns and honor the god. Robert has pointed out that this could very well have been a policy, on behalf of Clarian officials, to strengthen ties between Colophon and Hierapolis which,

unlike its neighbor city of Laodicea, had not sent an embassy to consult Apollo at Claros.⁴⁴ Claros had the ambition and ability to export popularity throughout Asia Minor, particularly through its oracles.

There are more responses recorded from Didyma than Claros, but the ones from Claros are of a much more international nature. The Didymaeian oracles were usually given to individuals, often concerned with religious propriety, whereas oracles from Claros tended to be given to entire communities and concerned communal problems such as plague and earthquakes. Of the 25 extant responses from Claros, only six are delivered to individuals, and the remainder concern entire states.⁴⁵ Another distinction is that most of the responses from Didyma were found within the sanctuary, while those of Claros were found in the cities which consulted the god, which also seems to be the dominant practice at Delphi.⁴⁶ Perhaps this can be explained by the relatively late revival of the oracles of Asia Minor – their method of oracular consultation developed alongside a new penchant for inscriptional practice. The honorific desire to immortalize was becoming more popular just as Claros and Didyma were giving more oracles, another example in which these oracles conformed to new conventions in terms of the area and time. However, by the third century AD, inscriptional practices throughout the Roman Empire tend to diminish.

Other differences between Didyma and Claros can be seen in the form of response. They seemed to prefer different meters: at Didyma almost all of the extant responses are in hexameter, whereas Claros used hexameter as well as iambics or other, more complicated metrical forms.⁴⁷ Perhaps these more difficult forms can be attributed to a specialized official at Claros, trained in verse such as the *thespiodos* or the prophet, whereas the shorter, fixed responses may point to a lot oracle in operation at the site.⁴⁸ These differences show that it was not a particular method of prophecy, or method of production of oracles, that promoted the popularity of one oracular site or another, as both of the oracles of Asia Minor experienced a successful era despite their different practices.

Theological responses

As at Didyma, several responses from Claros are of a theological nature. By the end of the second century AD, Claros seemed to issue more theological oracles than even Didyma, particularly those that illustrated a syncretistic view of the universe and concerned a unique view of the nature of god. The content and context of these questions, as noted in Chapter 4, show that the religious thought of the day had begun to change. Philosophies which postulated a single Supreme Being had begun to spread around the Mediterranean: Plato's "One" or the Stoics' *Logos*, for example, would enhance different perceptions of the gods. Although these ideas had been common among philosophers since the Pythagoreans, Plato, and Aristotle, the notion of a Supreme Being had spread into cult and society, not simply amongst the educated. Also, in Parke's

words, “the second century AD was a period when Mysteries and initiations were features of religious cults achieving new popularity” and, to correspond to these concerns, Claros issued responses that dealt with Mysteries, magic, the nature of god, and syncretism.⁴⁹ For example, responses No. 25–28, as compiled by Merkelbach and Stauber, are oracles in which information about the nature of god is given.⁵⁰ One such oracle has attracted much attention from scholars in recent years:

When someone asked Apollo, who or what God is above all, he answered in 21 verses, the beginning is this:

Of itself has grown, without teachers, without a mother, steadfast, whose name cannot be put in words, dwelling in the fire, that is God, and we messengers are only a small part of God.⁵¹

Lactantius claims that he derives this oracle from a pagan source:

...since we are defending the cause of truth before people who are astray from it in the service of false religions, what sort of proof could we better use against them than to rebut them with the evidence of their own gods?⁵²

It is likely that some of Lactantius’ readers were not Christian and, therefore, familiar with various oracular traditions. Lactantius saw that his argument would be better served by authentic oracles, rather than inventions. Additionally, as *Divinae Institutiones* was written in Nicomedia, the proximity of Asia Minor’s oracles is a factor. Lactantius, in a sense, flatters the oracles of Asia Minor, as the god preferred this region to Delphi; it suggests that his audience may have taken pride in their own local oracles.⁵³

Further support for Lactantius’ faithful representation of the oracle appears in an inscription from Oenoanda, as well as another literary source – the *Tübingen Theosophy*.⁵⁴ It is in this text that the oracle is found in its longest form:

When a certain man named Theophilus asked Apollo, “Are you God or is another?” he gave the following oracle:

Allotted to be above the celestial vault, he is
 An infinite flame, moving, a boundless eternity;
 Among the blessed ones he is inconceivable, unless
 He, the great father, intentionally designs for them to behold himself.
 Where he is, aether does not bear the brilliant stars,
 Nor is the clear moon suspended there;
 God does not meet them on his way, and not even I myself
 Extend there as I whirl in the aether encompassing everything with my rays.
 But God is an immense channel of fire,
 Moving in a spiral, rushing. Nor would
 Any burn his heart who touched that aethereal fire,
 For it holds no burning, but with unceasing care

Aion is mingled with Aion from God himself.

Of itself has grown, without teachers, without a mother, steadfast, whose name cannot be put in words, dwelling in the fire, that is God, and we messengers are only a small part of God.⁵⁵

The inscription of the oracle means that there is less need to rely on the Christian sources, and the literary texts assure us the oracle came from Apollo at Claros. Still, there are discrepancies in the sources: the inscription is only six lines whereas there are 21 verses known to Lactantius and sixteen known to the author of the *Theosophy*. The last three recorded are verbatim in Lactantius.⁵⁶ This should not hold our attention for long, as it is likely that the inscription was shortened because there was not enough room on the slab for the entirety of the oracle: a summary of the response fitted nicely.⁵⁷ Also, the name of the consultant, Theophilus, is indicated in the *Theosophy* but not in the inscription nor in Lactantius' account. Pricolo cites this as evidence that each literary source relied on two separate sources for the oracle.⁵⁸

Merkelbach and Stauber claim that the texts were a set of oracular language, and probably used 700 times.⁵⁹ Potter argues that the three different texts were formed independently of each other, however, Lane Fox and Mitchell both contend that the compilers of the *Theosophy* produced a faulty version of the text by combining several similar but unrelated texts.⁶⁰ The similarities may arise from the use of a common source and the omissions in any of the shorter versions may have been due to a need for brevity: Lactantius does mention that more lines were known to him; he simply omits them, and this could also be probable in the case of an inscription. Even in the event that the extant texts relied on different sources, they are all saying the same thing. This oracle emanates from Claros, and is one of several responses which Clarian Apollo attests to his expertise in the nature of God.

New evidence has demonstrated the existence of an oracular site at Oenoanda, at least from the Roman Imperial period.⁶¹ This means that the delegation traveled to Claros to seek guidance, despite the local oracular seat and suggests that Claros' authority and popularity were considerable. Yet, the most significant aspect of this text is certainly the theological and philosophical implications which describe the nature of god. It is interesting that many of the qualities depict God as what it is *not* and, particularly, that it is ineffable. This suggests a syncretistic view and is reminiscent of many philosophical notions of the day. As the inscription dates to no later than the second century, the trend at this time appears to envision god without any name.⁶² This is seen in relation to the religious theology of the Neoplatonists: The Supreme God was far *more* than the civic gods, who had names, human characteristics, and particular attributes.⁶³ The Neoplatonists wanted to stress the uniqueness and supremacy of the One by maintaining its ineffable nature. Hermes Trismegistus said: "God is one, and what is one needs no name. He that is nameless."⁶⁴ The variety of names given to the Supreme God were clearly insufficient as none of the philosophers could agree, therefore, God cannot be contained in a name – as soon

as a concept has been put into language, it is no longer a pure, intellectual manifestation, and thus imperfect. Despite an ineffable nature, it seems God could be identified with several different gods becoming, therefore, a syncretistic amalgamation of various understandings of the divine. That Apollo assumed this syncretistic nature is evidenced by this and other oracles from Claros.

Apollo, in Asia Minor, issued several syncretistic oracles, and, “on one occasion, Claros said that Zeus, Hades, Helios, and Dionysus were one and the same – a sign of the henotheistic times.”⁶⁵

The validity of this verse is justified from an oracle of the Clarian Apollo, in which another name is attached to the sun god, which is in precisely these holy verses listed the “Iao” (Iahwe). Apollo of Claros was questioned, for the God, called the Iao, he said this:

Men who are initiated into the mysteries must keep strictly silent. But if you only have a little bit of insight and a weak mind, then declare that: The highest God of all to be Iao, but in winter Hades, Zeus at the beginning of spring, summer Helios, at autumn, gentle Iacchus.⁶⁶

Religious sentiments had certainly developed from the traditional religions to a more dynamic amalgamation of ideas. The idea developed around the *powers* of gods, rather than the *personalities* of gods, and the syncretism of several similar aspects of the different gods enabled them to be seen as the same. In the case of Claros, the oracle was well adapted to satisfy these religious needs of the time and the oracular responses are a reflection of the new religious and philosophical demands of society. These needs had changed from the traditional oracle-seeking reasons such as colonization, kingship, and pagan religious rites, to a more personal religious context. This oracle not only alludes to a Supreme Being and the syncretistic tendencies of the era, but also to another trend, the gaining popularity of Mystery cults.

Claros' association with Mystery cults is seen from the construction of its temple, in the previous oracle, and other oracular inscriptions. A citizen of Charax, who collected oracles, was initiated into a Mystery cult and consulted the oracle after having entered the temple.⁶⁷ Based on the evidence of a few of the abovementioned inscriptions found at Claros, it appears that Mystery rites were associated with oracular consultation. Sadly no details are given, besides the suggestion that an initiated inquirer could enter the innermost chambers of the temple along with the cult officials.⁶⁸ However, evidence concerning a delegation from Amaseia, which attests five young people who had been initiated, tells us that other consultants of Apollo at Claros were initiated into the rites.⁶⁹ Not much else is known about the Mystery cults at Claros as they are inherently enigmatic, but the latter inscription seems to be dated to AD 132.⁷⁰ This demonstrates, once again, Claros' ability to adapt to the popular concerns of the time and Mystery cults which had been a valuable religious institution since their beginnings in early antiquity. Claros' reputation for Mystery cults could have broadened its clientele base.

The association between Mystery cults and oracles in Asia Minor is also found in a treatise by Lucian. *Alexander* is illustrative of the popular enthusiasm for oracles in the second century AD, but it also warns the audience about the ways in which a charlatan could manipulate the beliefs, fears, and hopes of people. In the story, Alexander and his friend put bronze tablets into the temple of Apollo in Chalcedon, foretelling that Apollo and his son, Asclepius, would come to live in Abonuteichos in Paphlagonia. The people built a temple to him and Alexander cleverly convinced them that he was Asclepius' prophet by crafting an egg with a snake inside and a man's head – the god Glycon. This portent proved to the people that Alexander was a divine prophet.⁷¹ Apart from a thriving oracular business, Alexander also instituted Mysteries with the result that Mysteries and oracles could have an affinity with one another in Asia Minor. Based on Claros' mysterious architecture and, perhaps, Didyma's as well, the oracle had connections with certain Mystery cults thereby increasing the number of visitors, its credibility, and its popularity. Most importantly, however, was the ability to respond to the psychological and religious needs of patrons at Claros.

In the second century AD, concerns about magic were of interest to consultants of Claros and the oracle provided answers to questions of a magical nature, and responses such as these find no parallel in the Delphic corpus. The most overtly "magical" oracle from Claros is found in an inscription from Ephesus and is associated with the great plague of the late AD 160s.⁷² Based on the form of the lettering, the inscription is dated to the second century AD. The magical connotations are found in the use of the words *φάρμακα*, *μάγου*, and *μάγματα*, which are unusual within oracular responses and clearly have a magical connotation.

[For Help, you have to look to] Artemis with the golden quiver, born from my family; for she is the ancestral leader of the entire town, midwife and augments of mortals, giver of harvest; whose image from Ephesus brings shining gold. Put her up in a temple, full of joy: She will forsake your miseries and will dissolve the deadly *pharmaka* of pestilence by melting down with her flame-bearing torches, in nightly fire, the *kneaded wax-figurines*, the evil signs of the *magos'* art ...⁷³

This response prescribes an unusual way to bring about the end of the plague. The goddess of the Ephesians will melt the wax figurines that caused the epidemic. It is not strange that Artemis is evoked as it was the Ephesians who consulted Apollo, and the fame of her sanctuary in Ephesus was widespread. The depiction of her is, however, distinctive. Artemis is uniquely portrayed as the conqueror of evil and bears fire torches, which are iconographically associated with Hecate. This relationship again reminds us strongly of magic, as Hecate was identified as a goddess of the dark art.

The notion that it was magic that caused the plague rather than, say, the gods, is an important development in Greek thought and one which is

demonstrated by this response from the second century AD. Although some misfortunes were attributed to magic, these largely concerned the personal ailments of individuals and to explicate community misfortunes by dark magic is nearly unheard of in the Greco-Roman world.⁷⁴ At least in this oracle “magic was accepted to be effective,” in Várhelyi’s words.⁷⁵ The magical nature of these responses and questions is not found at Delphi and this could help to explain why the oracles of Asia Minor experienced such success, as compared to Delphi.

Merkelbach suggests that the oracle prescribes clients to make wax figures, which represent the evil of the plague, and burn them in order to symbolically destroy the affliction. He cites another famous case of the burning of wax figures with an oath of future settlers in Cyrene, “they shaped wax figures and burned them.”⁷⁶ However, this does not fully take into account the role of Artemis – she is called upon to *undo* the magical process and save the community from the affliction. In contrast, Graf suggests the plague was caused by a sorcerer, “who buried wax figurines,” and proposes that the torches which the goddess holds would melt the wax and destroy the evil cause of the calamity.⁷⁷ In this way the oracle is describing the iconography of the statue, or form, of Artemis. In Graf’s view, the oracle calls for the installation of a statue of Artemis in the city because this will protect the citizens from further disaster, and cites several cases in Greece in which statues are used to ward off or alleviate evil. Both interpretations hold merit, but Graf’s view takes into account the role of Artemis more fully, particularly in terms of the installation of her statue “joyfully in a temple” and the role of the wax figurines. The inclusion of magic, a cause of plague and of a goddess’ ability to undo a magical spell, is most significant. This oracle is one of few which have overt magical connotations and this development, in oracular practice, may have contributed to the success and fame witnessed at Claros during the first three centuries AD.

Strikingly, another oracle from Claros contains certain magical connotations, an oracle which prescribes a defensive type of magic in a public setting. Around AD 160, the people of Syedra, a port in Pamphylia, were continuously attacked by pirates (ληϊσταί), and turned to the Clarian Apollo for help.⁷⁸ They were told to erect a statue of Ares in the middle of the city, bound with iron, and perform sacrifices next to the image. It is significant that the Olympian gods were used in such a way. Their use in a civic context may have been diminishing but their presence was still considerable, perhaps owing to their antiquity. Although the oracle does not specifically mention magic, the act of binding is explicit and is a magical method which was used to elicit a desired result throughout Greece. Apollo at Claros not only incorporates magical notions into his oracles, but uses a unique form of defensive magic. In this way, Claros could adapt to the expectations of its clients and relate to the religious and social trends of the day.

In addition to the oracular responses from Claros, we find other ties between magic and Claros in a literary account. Tacitus mentions Claros alongside astrology and magic when describing the rivalry of Agrippina the Younger and

Lollia Paulina. Agrippina charged Lollia with sorcery, in relation to their competition for Claudius' hand in marriage, and accused her of consulting "astrologers and magicians and the image of Clarian Apollo."⁷⁹ This demonstrates that magic and the like were considered unlawful, and associates the oracle with the darker arts of magic and astrology. Indeed, Tacitus' association of the oracle, astrology, and magic suggests that these occult forms may have gained a high degree of authority in a social context, the focus of Chapters 6 and 7. In any case, this account further strengthens the association Claros had with magic, which was not typical of Delphic oracular practice, although there are parallels with Dodona's lead tablets.⁸⁰

These accounts regarding magic and the Clarian oracle are significant in other ways, not only because these themes are not found in other oracles, but because they demonstrate that magic, at this level, was viewed as capable of causing strife. This was an idea which developed in the second century AD and gradually became more widespread. Instances in which magic was employed as a defensive tactic in a public context are largely unique. This is true within the oracular corpus, and in general, whereas most other instances of magic found in literature, epigraphy, and on papyri, concern hostile black magic practiced in the private sphere.⁸¹ For example, there are various *defixiones* (binding spells and curse tablets) regarding legal disputes and directed at opponents and accusers, or to take revenge or seek justice. Additionally, as seen in the extant oracles, the "old gods" were able to assist men against magic.

Typically, the circumstances for consulting the oracle were often decided *before* consultation. For example, the decision to colonize was often made before the god was consulted and the function of the oracle concerned authority and religious sanction. In the case of the oracles from Claros, the people may have already decided the plague was caused by magic and Apollo simply confirmed the expectations of his clients. If this is indeed the case, it shows the ability of the oracle to adapt to contemporary concerns, namely new philosophies and novel ideas about god and the divine, as well as magic and methods for securing public safety. This flexibility offered Claros the opportunity to mediate the contemporary interest in magical ritual, something which certainly increased the popularity of the site.

The growth of both Claros and Didyma may also have come about because they had become places where a city could publicly demonstrate its ties with Hellenic culture, a function which Delphi also shared, albeit not on the same scale. Yet, for the oracles of Asia Minor, this was particularly significant after the Hellenistic Age, as they had to carve out identities that were both Asian and Greek. Delphi had already accomplished this feat early in the sanctuary's history. The consultation of Claros and Didyma would promote participation in a culture in which an individual city may otherwise have been lost. This provided the oracles of Asia Minor with an opportunity to facilitate cultural identities within Asia and to tie the region to the larger Hellenistic framework, making it easier for those colonies to incorporate themselves into the Empire. Examples of this are particularly obvious in the incorporation and acceptance of

Imperial cult. Although this practice had early beginnings in the Hellenistic Age with the deification of Alexander, it gained popularity in the Roman era. The institution of Imperial cult achieved the inclusion of the new rulers within the religious framework of the existing culture – it was an extension of Hellenistic ruler cult, thus tying the two societies closer together. Additional evidence of Claros and Didyma's role in creating a new Greco-Asian identity is evident in the list of important delegates recorded as consulting Apollo at both Didyma and Claros.⁸² Since foreign policy was no longer an effective way to demonstrate authority, which belonged to Rome, involvement in the cultural aspect of oracles was crucial to the development of a Hellenized, and by extension, Roman identity in Asia Minor. Delphi had once assumed this role, but as Greek culture expanded away from the epicenter that was once Parnassus, it no longer actively participated in the formation of cultural identity on the scale of the oracles of Asia Minor.

It seems then that this ability to incorporate new ideas into oracles reflects the religious needs of this part of the world. The fact that Didyma and Claros could incorporate these concerns into their existing oracular model contributed to the success the oracles of Asia Minor shared. In addition to the region's prosperity, and the patronage shown by Rome, the oracles were seen as avenues for gaining answers to questions not previously considered oracular territory. Magic, theurgy, and theology were clearly on the minds of the people in Asia Minor and the oracles there evolved to accommodate this change in thought and practice.

Delphi's inability to adapt

It remains to be seen *why* Delphi did not adjust to the new needs and interests of a vast proportion of the Greco-Roman population who developed an increasing awareness of certain occult practices and religious notions. A substantial factor in this trend is seen in the economic instability of mainland Greece, as compared to Asia Minor.⁸³ As the region itself declined in political significance and economic security, the oracle, too, no longer possessed the supremacy it had held in centuries past, and the economic condition of Greece did not facilitate similar consultations at Delphi.

Polybius gives us a clear impression of the state of mainland Greece in the second century BC. "In our time all Greece was visited by a dearth of children and generally a decay of population, owing to which the cities were denuded of inhabitants, and a failure of productiveness resulted, though there were no long-continued wars or serious pestilences among us."⁸⁴ Polybius recognized the significance of a contemporary decline in production and economic success in Greece, something which is reminiscent of Ammonius' reasons for the decline of the oracle of Delphi in Plutarch's essay.⁸⁵ Indeed, Greece as a whole, and Delphi in particular, did not have a stable economy, particularly throughout the Hellenistic and early Roman period.

Pausanias also records the poor state of Greece during his travels, which were contemporary with a decline in the oracular operations at Delphi. He records a

population decline in Boeotian Thebes; other centers which once had overwhelming wealth, “are not so prosperous now in the power of riches as a single moderately wealthy individual,” and even Delos is nearly deserted.⁸⁶ The regional success of Asia Minor would have helped to promote the nearby oracles. On the other hand, many Greeks were too poor to make expensive offerings or take an expensive trip to Delphi.

An inscription at Delphi, formally acknowledged by the Aetolians, is in the form of a letter and highlights the harsh social and economic conditions at the site between c. 185–175 BC.⁸⁷ A Cretan town sent the letter to the Aetolian government:

The marshals and the city of the Axians send greetings to the *synedroi* and the general and the cavalry-general of the Aetolians. You know Eraton our fellow-citizen, who sailed off on a military service to Cyprus, took a wife and two sons, Epicles and Euagoras. It chanced that, Eraton having died in Cyprus, Epicles and their mother were taken prisoner and Epicles was sold at Amphissa. Epicles paid off the ransom money and lives among you in Amphissa. He is a fellow-citizen of ours, as are his children Erasiphon and Timonax and his daughter Melita. You will therefore act honorably by considering how, if anyone injures them, he may be prevented by you (from doing so) both publically and privately: and how the record of common citizenship may endure forever.⁸⁸

As Davies has pointed out, this letter demonstrates a number of different social and economic considerations at Delphi and the surrounding areas. First, it expresses the need for the Cretans to look elsewhere, besides their own territory, for work as mercenaries; evidently there was insufficient work available to them. Likewise, the threat of pirates affected trade and, therefore, the economy of mainland Greece. Beginning in the Hellenistic age, mainland Greece began to see depopulation as well as economic struggle. Asia Minor, on the other hand, had a much more vibrant economy. An influx of a money-based economy followed Alexander the Great into Asia Minor, funded by the precious metals from the treasuries of the conquered east.⁸⁹ The disparities in the two regions’ economic stability contributed to the success of Asia Minor’s oracles compared to that of Delphi, however, economics alone cannot account for religious trends and practices.

Asia Minor also had a thriving philosophical scene. Delphi is relatively close to Athens, one of the most popular places to study during the “Second Sophistic,” and many philosophers traveled there and revered the site. However, from the extant oracles we see little inquiry at Delphi regarding new philosophical ideas. Perhaps people consulted the resident philosophers at the sanctuary rather than Apollo. Additionally, many students would travel to Smyrna, Pergamum, and Ephesus. This created an intellectual climate which is reflected in the oracular responses of Asia Minor. Many of the oracles there were not concerned with personal or political matters but, rather, general

theological and philosophical problems which would have been prevalent within educated circles. Many of these ideas have an eastern origin, and the proximity of Claros and Didyma to the source of many of these ideas contributed the theological nature of their responses and, in turn, their success – geography was key, not only in terms of economic success, but social and cultural success as well. This is also demonstrated by the relative ease of travel by sea, especially once Rome dominated.

The location of Delphi made it less conducive to the interchange of these more eastern ideas. As the Hellenic and Roman worlds grew, Delphi was drawn further from the center and it was difficult for people at the extremities of the empire to reach the oracle. The known Greek world had expanded and Delphi no longer found itself at the epicenter. This is rather ironic because central the location of Delphi as the *omphalos*, largely proximate to other Greek *poleis*, was initially a significant factor in its establishment and prestige.

A main reason for Delphi's inability to adapt to changing concerns of the day is its strict adherence to traditional forms of worship, ritual, and religion. Claros and Didyma would have had access to many eastern ideas from the time of their emergence and, so, it became a natural progression of procedure to incorporate many such issues. Delphi, on the other hand, initially established and reinforced traditional religious beliefs and so was far more reluctant to deviate from the conventional trend. The questions concerning religious cult and ritual became one of Delphi's most significant roles, however, due to the variations of religious practice from *polis* to *polis*, the Pythia's "principle in answering questions on sacrifices and ancestor-worship was to reply that the ritual piety was to act in accordance with the custom of the city."⁹⁰ Delphi's role in religion was to sanction pious behavior, rather than to establish it. This is largely due to the nature of consultation at Delphi: the Pythia could not inject new ideas into Greek religion but could only respond to those ideas. Most often, a consultant would travel to Delphi with a specific concern in mind, and the oracle gave authorization or confirmation to the inquirer instead of offering predictions and novel ideas. In this way, it was the consultants who viewed Delphi as unfit to deal with new theological affairs. The sanctuary's specialty was outside the scope of these concerns. The prophecies seen in the theological oracles demonstrate a break from the traditional oracles of Delphi which we know from the Archaic and Classical periods.

The hypothesis generally put forward to explain the emergence of the theological oracles links them to what has been called "the crisis of the third century."⁹¹ This period, between the assassination of Alexander Severus in AD 235 and the reign of Diocletian in AD 284, can be characterized by an intense pessimism found in the contemporary writers, particularly the rationalist philosophers such as the Stoics, Epicureans, and even to some degree the Skeptics. This mentality spread to religion. According to Dodds, "the essential part of religion lay no longer in acts of cult, but in a silent contemplation of the divine and in a realization of man's kinship with it."⁹² In this way, the theological oracles are seen as manifestations of the desire, characteristic of the time, to

have a personal relationship with the divine. Delphi's main religious function was to prescribe various observances to the *civic* cults, and to address ties to more personal religion only as they arise within the context of the established public cult.

Delphi was prone to sanction time-honored forms of religious worship, coinciding with the conventional practices of the individual *poleis*. Indeed, as Morgan notes, the early beginnings of Delphi developed divinatory practices "as a means of legitimizing the gradual introduction of social change whilst apparently maintaining basic community values."⁹³ Certainly, throughout Delphi's long history, the oracle helped to shape religious understanding by providing instruction on the proper way to honor and appease the Greek pantheon. But as society began to change, the traditional Greek gods no longer reigned supreme. As new gods from the east were imported, new religious philosophies began to spread, and an emphasis on a personal relation with the divine increased. Delphi's authority in all matters of traditional Greek religion became marginalized. The oracles in Asia Minor assumed the role which Delphi had had in the eighth century BC and they were crucial in shaping the religious structure within communities and the understanding of the *polis* 700 years later.

Delphi was the object of fascination and respect for the devotees of Plato, as well as other philosophers down to the second century AD. Several philosophers, many of them Platonists, received similar honors at Delphi and, certainly, the center had a reputation for wisdom and learning.⁹⁴ This would suggest that Delphi could be the first port of call for issues regarding new philosophic ideas such as theurgy and religious ideas, such as elements of syncretism and monotheism. There is, however, no evidence in the oracular corpus that this occurred.⁹⁵ This can be explained in terms of spatial elements and the multifunctional nature of Delphi, as discussed in Chapter 3. The center operated on various levels, and so it does not necessarily follow that the oracle would be consulted on these religious and philosophical issues simply because philosophers were honored at Delphi and visited the sanctuary. As we have seen, the oracle only operated on certain days, and so the philosophical aspect of Delphi existed year-round; but other visitors did not inevitably inquire at Delphi regarding these matters. Perhaps, instead, visitors consulted the philosophers who often congregated there.⁹⁶

In terms of oracles more generally, Greeks of the second and third centuries AD were perhaps disenchanted with the ambiguity of oracles, desiring a sense of certainty about nature and existence that they could not find with oracles. Instead, people were turning to more substantial sciences in increasing numbers. Astrology and theurgy provided solid answers to questions once sought at oracles and these answers were, in a sense, seen as more accurate since there was an established and systematic method for obtaining answers. Additionally, new philosophies and religions were becoming more finely tuned with society's changing ideals and values. Instead of the old civic religion, people were more interested in personal salvation and an intimate relation with a Supreme Being. The oracle of Delphi no longer satisfied the increasing complexity of the questions faced by society and individuals.

The following chapters will trace the spread of astrology, Neoplatonism, theurgy, and various sects of early Christianity to show how the popularity of these trends influenced the consultation of Delphi. These new institutions provided a stepping stone to the ideas of Fate, salvation, and monotheism, thereby contributing to the decline of Delphi and other traditional Greek religious practices.

Notes

- 1 Paus. 7.5.3, K. Heineman trans.
- 2 Homeric *Hymn to Artemis*, 9. "She waters her horses from Meles deep in reeds, and swiftly drives her all-golden chariot through Smyrna to vine-clad Claros where Apollo, god of the silver bow, sits waiting for the far-shooting goddess who delights in arrows" (ἦ θ' ἵππους ἄρσασα βαθυσχοίνιο Μέλῃτος ῥίμφα διὰ Σμύρνης παγχρύσεον ἄρμα διώκει ἐς Κλάρων ἀμπελόεσσαν, δθ' ἀργυρότοξος Ἀπόλλων ἦσται μινάζων ἐκατηβόλον ἰοχέαιραν). H.G. Evelyn-White trans.
- 3 Dignas (2002), p. 294; see also Tac. *Ann.* 3.62.1.
- 4 Levin (1989), p. 1629, c. 200 BC the youngest son of Attalus I was honored with a statue in the temple of Claros.
- 5 Ferrary (2000), pp. 331–376. For Octavian and the temple, see p. 357.
- 6 Busine (2005), p. 32. Busine stresses the importance of Roman patronage to the success of the oracles of Asia Minor throughout her work.
- 7 Robert (1960), p. 21.
- 8 Tac. *Ann.* 2.54, "Non femina illic, ut apud Delphos, sed certis e familiis et ferme Mileto accitus sacerdos numerum modo consultantium et nomina audit; tum in specum degressus, hausta fontis arcani aqua, ignarus plerumque litterarum et carminum, edit responsa versibus compositis super rebus quas quis mente concepit." C.H. Moore trans. The fact that Tacitus mentions only a priest regarding the oracular operation has led several scholars to postulate a change in AD 130, with the addition of the vocation of a *thespiode* in the inscriptional record, see below.
- 9 Iambl. *Myst.* 3.11; See also Aelius Aristides *Sacred Tales* 3.12.
- 10 Iambl. *Myst.* 3.11.124, "Τὸ δὴ ἐν Κολοφῶνι μαντεῖον ὁμολογεῖται παρὰ πᾶσι δι' ὕδατος χρηματίζειν." A. Wilder trans.
- 11 Flacelière (1965), p. 30.
- 12 Robinson (1991), p. 62. Ferrary (2005) notes that the dedication of the temple could be no earlier than AD 135 because the inscription refers to Hadrian as Imperator II, a designation he took after September 15, 134.
- 13 Robert (1967), pp. 311–312.
- 14 Iambl. *Myst.* 3.11.124. Busine (2002), p. 191 has pointed out that Tacitus' account is also consistent with archeology, despite the confusion of modern scholars. He says, "tum in specum degressus, hausta fontis arcani aqua," (Tac. *Ann.* 2.54.2–4) in which *specus* does not have to refer to a cavern, but can simply mean "underground" indicating the inner part of the temple, rather than the various caves which surround the site.
- 15 Busine (2005), p. 194. This also is reminiscent of the covered entrance to the *stadium* at Olympia.
- 16 *IGRom* 4.1586 and 4.360. See also Graf (2003), p. 246 and Robinson (1991), p. 63.
- 17 Macridy (1912), nos. 15, 16, 20.
- 18 Robinson (1991), p. 63.
- 19 Macridy (1912), pp. 155–173; Robert (1954), (1967). Additionally, the account of Claros we gain from Tacitus (*Ann.* 2.54) only mentions a priest, and there is no allusion to an additional official concerned with oracular consultation.
- 20 Picard (1922a), pp. 197–199, Lane Fox (1987), pp. 172–173, and Parke (1985), pp. 146–147. However, both Busine (2006) and Robinson (1991) argue that this stance

must be taken with caution, as inscriptional practices change, vary and, at Claros, are inconsistent. Busine (2006), p. 290 argues that this addition of the *thespiodos* may not be proof of a new post, but rather a development in inscriptional practice. However, since Claros was in the habit of inscribing “priest” before this time, it is suspicious that such a role would have been neglected in the inscriptional record before AD 130.

- 21 Robinson (1991), p. 65.
- 22 Busine (2006), p. 287.
- 23 Parke (1985), pp. 220–224 and Lane Fox (1987), pp. 184–186.
- 24 Robert (1954), pp. 15–21; see also Potter (1994), p. 43.
- 25 Busine (2002), p. 191.
- 26 Iamb. *Myst.* 3.11.
- 27 Robinson (1991), p. 64.
- 28 Ferrary (2005), p. 740. Although there is an interruption of many inscriptions during the reign of Commodus, Ferrary attributes this to the destruction of many engravings during the Byzantine era. Rather, based on the preserved memorials, city delegations continued to consult Apollo well into the third century (Heraclea, Apamea, Bithynia, Apollonia in Pisidia, Chios, and others) so there is no reason to suspect a decline in the oracle during the third century AD.
- 29 Mellink (1960), p. 66. For a chronology of the delegations, see Ferrary (2005).
- 30 Robert (1954), pp. 27–28, Macedonian and Thracian region; Bithynia; a few from Crete; Lycania and Cappadocia; Pisidia; Caria; Lydia and Phrygia; a few from Ionia and Aeolia; Paphlagonia and Pontus.
- 31 *CIG* 3769, “Ἀμφίπολ’, εὐτραφίης γεοθάλλεος ὃ πολὺτόρι, κακκῆαι κέλομαί σε ζῶπυρον ὀρμενόμεντα.” K. Heineman trans. See also Merkelbach (1975) and Peek (1976). It is interesting to note that the god saves “by his fire,” a remedy that seemed to become a rather common idea surrounding several oracles from Claros, particularly the oracle from Ephesus, discussed below and another oracle from Claros describing god as “an imperishable blazing flame of supercelestial fire...” (ἔσθ’ ὑπερουραίου πυρός ἀφθίτος αἰθομένη φλόξ...). See Erbse (1941), p. 170 (*Theos.* 15). Although not specifically mentioned as Clarian, Buresch (1889), p. 57 argued on the basis of the similarity of form and content with the oracle from Oenoanda that it was indeed from Claros. For the symbolic significance of fire and the oracles from Claros, see Oesterheld (2008), pp. 201–220.
- 32 Behr (1968), p. 71.
- 33 For Hierapolis, see Lloyd-Jones and West (1966). This oracle, too, prescribes a ritual cleansing with fire. For Pergamum, see Picard (1922b) who has clearly shown this oracle to be Clarian. For Callipolis and Caesarea Trocetta, see Buresch (1889).
- 34 French (1980), pp. 707–709.
- 35 Friedländer (1910), p. 178.
- 36 Nock (1972), p. 161. Parke (1985), p. 161 allows that this is possible, but is skeptical that this is the only extant instance of this kind in which the use of a corpus of oracles is preserved. He suggests rather that this is an indication of a single consultation.
- 37 Nilsson (1974), p. 477.
- 38 Robert (1954), pp. 20–21.
- 39 Parke (1985), pp. 160–162; Birley (1974).
- 40 Veyne (1986), pp. 275–276. He cites Nock who argues that people were more interested in the power of god than god himself. See Nock (1972), p. 43.
- 41 Speidel (1978), pp. 4–10. See *CIL* XIII, 6623; *CIL* XIII, 11780, *CIL* XIII, 11781, *CIL* XXIII, 6618; *CIL* XIII, 7457.
- 42 For Lambaesis see, *CIL* VIII, 2680; for Upper Germany, see *CIL* VIII, 7457; *CIL* VIII, 6646; *CIL* VIII, 11811; and for Numidia, see *CIL* VIII, 18223.
- 43 Robinson (1991), p. 72.
- 44 Robert (1969), p. 300. He points out that 25 delegates from Laodicea were sent to Claros, and none from Hierapolis.

- 45 Johnston (2008), p. 78. For the role of the chorus in these delegations, see Lane Fox (1987), pp. 178–180. For a list of the delegations, see Mellink (1960) and Robert (1954); for the chronology of the delegations, see Ferrary (2005).
- 46 Robert (1970), pp. 590–592.
- 47 Lane Fox (1987), p. 182.
- 48 Robinson (1991), p. 63.
- 49 Parke (1985), p. 147.
- 50 Merkelbach and Stauber (2004), p. 3. See also Pricoco (1987), Mitchell (1999), Parke (1985); and Lane Fox (1987).
- 51 Lactant. *Div. inst.* 1.7.1. “*quaerenti cuidam, quis esset, aut quid esset omnino Deus, respondit viginti et uno versibus, quorum hoc principium est: αὐτοφυῆς, ἀδίδακτος, ἀμήτωρ, ἀστυφέλικτος, οὖνομα μηδὲ λόγῳ χωρούμενος, ἐν πυρὶ ναίων, τοῦτο θεός· μικρὰ δὲ θεοῦ μερίς ἄγγελοι ἡμεῖς.*” A. Bowen trans. The first few lines of this oracle are cited at the beginning of Chapter 4.
- 52 Lactant. *Div. inst.* 1.6.17, “*Sed cum defendamus causam veritatis apud eos, qui aberrantes a veritate falsis religionibus serviunt, quod genus probationis adversus eos magis adhibere debemus, quam ut eos deorum suorum testimoniis revincamus?*”
- 53 Freund (2006), p. 274.
- 54 For the literary account, see Erbse (1941), p. 169. For the inscription, see Bean (1971), pp. 20–22 no. 37. The inscription only records the last few lines:
Self-produced, untaught, without a mother, undisturbed, admitting of no name, with many names, dwelling in the fires, this is God. We messengers are a small part of God. To those who asked this concerning God, who he is, He said that God is all-seeing Aether, and that looking to him they must pray at day-break, facing east. ([α]ὐτοφυῆς, ἀδίδακτος, ἀμήτωρ, ἀστυφέλικτος, οὖνομα μὴ χωρῶν, πολυώνυμος, ἐν πυρὶ ναίων, τοῦτο θεός· μικρὰ δὲ θεοῦ μερίς ἄγγελοι ἡμεῖς. τοῦτο πευθομένοισι θεοῦ περὶ ὅστις ὑπάρχει, αἱ[θ]έ[ρ]α πανδερκ[ῆ] θε[ῶ]ν ἔννεπεν, εἰς ὃν ὀρῶντας εὐχέσθ' ἡώους πρὸς ἀντολίην ἐσορῶ[ν]τα[ς]), T.L. Robinson trans.
- 55 Erbse (1941), p. 169, τοῦνομα τὸν Ἀπόλλωνα ἐρωτήσαντος· ‘σὺ εἰ θεὸς ἢ ἄλλος;’, ἐχρησεν οὕτως· Ἔσθ', ὑπὲρ οὐρανίου κύτεος καθύπερθε λελογχώς, φλογμὸς ἀπειρ-εῖσιος, κινούμενος, ἄπειρος Αἰὼν· ἔστι δ' ἐνὶ μακάρεσσιν ἀμήχανος, εἰ μὴ ἐαυτὸν βουλάς· βουλευσῆσι πατὴρ μέγας, ὥς ἐσιδέσθαι. ἔνθα μὲν οὐτ' αἰθήρ φέρει ἀστέρας ἀγλαοφρεγείς οὔτε σεληναίη λιγυφρεγγέτις αἰωρεῖται, οὐ θεὸς ἀντίαει κατ' ἀταρπιδόν, οὐδ' ἐγὼ αὐτὸς ἀκτίσιν συνέχων ἐπικίδναμαι αἰθεροδινῆς. ἀλλὰ πέλει πυρσοῖο θεὸς περιμήκετος αὐλῶν, ἔρπων εὐλίγδην, ῥοιζούμενος, οὐ κεν ἐκεῖνου ἀγάμενος ἡφου-συρὸς αἰθερίου δαΐσειε τις ἦτορ· οὐ γὰρ ἔχει δαΐην, ἀζηχεῖ δ' ἐν μελεθηθμῷ αἰὼν αἰώνεσσι· ἐπιμίγνυται ἐκ θεοῦ αὐτοῦ. αὐτοφυῆς, ἀδίδακτος, ἀμήτωρ, ἀστυφέλικτος, οὖνομα μηδὲ λόγῳ χωρούμενος, ἐν πυρὶ ναίων, τοῦτο θεός· μικρὰ δὲ θεοῦ μερίς ἄγγελοι ἡμεῖς. T.L. Robinson trans. Lewy (1978) considers this oracle to be Chaldean, but Dodds (1951) and Majercik (1989) both argue that the *Tübingen Theosophy* 13 regards it as an oracle of Claros rather than a Chaldean Oracle.
- 56 Lactant. *Div. inst.* 1.7.1, “the god replied in 21 verses. Here are the first three...” (*respondit viginti et uno versibus, quorum hoc principium est...*). The source of Lactantius' quotation is disputed, Lane Fox (1987) suggests that he is following the corpus of Porphyry (likely his *De Philosophia ex Oraculis Haurienda*); Digeser (1998) and (2000) agrees that Porphyry was a likely source for Lactantius; Pricoco (1987) agrees in part, but also suggests the use of an additional oracular corpus available to Lactantius. Contra, see Ogilvie (1978) who suggests it was a Christian source.
- 57 Mitchell (1999), p. 87.
- 58 Pricoco (1987), p. 8.
- 59 Merkelbach and Stauber (1996).
- 60 Potter (1994); Lane Fox (1987); and Mitchell (1999).
- 61 Milner (2000).

- 62 For the date, see Robert (1971), pp. 597–619. Lane Fox (1987), p. 170 points out that this trend starts as early as Heraclitus c. 500 BC. The ineffable nature of God is reminiscent of the Pythagorean concept of *ἔχεμυθία*, or keeping silent. Many Greek philosophers continued this notion, such as Eudorus *apud* Simplicius, *On Aristotle's Physics*, 181, 22–30 and Plutarch (*De curiositate* 519c, *Quaestiones Convivales* 728d–e; Numa 8; *De Iside et Osiride* 378c–d). Most of these instances are mentioned in order to maintain a proper discourse on the nature of God.
- 63 Dam. *Pr.* 1.56.1–4; Iambl. *Myst.* 1.11.19–27; Procl. *Theol. Plat.* 2.65.5–15, *In Parm.* 1074.4–21.
- 64 Quoted by Lactantius *Div. inst.* 1.6.4, “ὁ δὲ θεός εἷς, ὁ δὲ εἷς ὀνόματος οὐ προσδέεται· ἔστιν γὰρ ὁ ὢν ἀνώνυμος.”
- 65 Johnston (2008), p. 78. See also Merkelbach and Stauber no. 28.
- 66 Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.18, 19–21, “*Et is quidem versus absolutior: ille vero eiusdem vatis operosior:*
 Εἷς Ζεὺς, εἷς Ἄϊδης, εἷς Ἥλιος, εἷς Διόνυσος.
Huius versus auctoritas fundatur oraculo Apollinis Clarii, in quo aliud quoque nomen soli adicitur, qui in isdem sacris versibus inter cetera vocatur Ἰαώ: nam consultus Apollo Clarius, quis deorum habendus sit qui vocatur Ἰαώ, ita effatus est:
 Ὅργια μὲν δεδαῶτας ἐχρῆν νηπευθέα κεῦθαι, εἰ δ’ ἄρα τοι παύρη σύνεσις καὶ νοῦς ἀλαπαδνός, φράζω τὸν πάντων ὑπατον θεὸν ἔμμεν Ἰαώ, χεῖματι μὲν τ’ αἰῶν, Δία δ’ εἵαρος ἀρχομένοιο, Ἥελιον δὲ θέρεος, μετοπώρου δ’ ἄβρον Ἰαώ.” T.L. Robinson trans. Macrobius records that this oracle’s meaning was investigated by Cornelius Labeo in his book, *De oraculo Apollinis Clarii*. Robinson (1981) follows the suggestion of Nilsson (1974) and von Jan (1848): Iao is an inscriptional error for Iacchus (the mystic name for Dionysus). They argue the adjective “gentle” better suits Dionysus and is discordant with Iao.
- 67 Busine (2005), p. 193. See also BCH *Suppl.* 16.
- 68 *IGRom* 4.1586 and 4.360.
- 69 *I. Pergamum* 324, 1.4–6, see also Busine (2005), p. 194.
- 70 Macridy (1905), p. 171.
- 71 Lucian, *Alex* 10–18.
- 72 For the association with the plague, see Várhelyi (2001); for the date of the inscription, see Graf (1992).
- 73 [...] Α Η [] ΩΙΔΑΠ [].....ΗΣ[
 [Ἀρ]τεμιν εὐφარέτρειαν ἐμῆς γενεῆς γεγαυῖαν· [π]άσης γάρ πόλιος προκαθηγέτις ἐστὶ γενέθλης μαῖα καὶ αὐξήτειρα βροτῶν καρπῶν τε δότεира· ἥς μορφὴν Ἐφέσοιο κομίσσατε χρυσοφάνων. κάτθετε δ’ ἐν νηῷ πολυγηθέες· ἢ κεν ἀλύξει πῆματα καὶ λοιμοῖο βροτοφθόρα φάρμα[κ]α λύσει λαμπάσι πυρσοφόροις νυχία φλογὶ μάγματα κηροῦ τηξασα, μάγου κακοτήϊα σύμβολα τέχνης· ἀντάρ ἐπὶν τελέσητε θεῇ προστάγματ’ ἐμεῖο, ὕμνοις ἰοχέαιραν ἀπρόσμαχον ἰθυβέλεια καὶ θυσίας ἄξασθε κλυτὴν ἐπιωπέα κούρην, ἐν τε χοροῖς ἐν τ’ εἰλαπίναις κούραι θ’ ἅμα παισὶν παρθένον ἀλμήσσαν ὑπὲρ χθόνα Μαίονος Ἐρμοῦ πάντη κυδαίνοντες ἀναστέφει· εὐρέα μύρτα κεκλόμενοι γαίης Ἐφεσηίδος Ἀρτεμιν ἀγνὴν εἰς αἰὲν ὁππῶς ὕμνι πέλοι ἄχραντος ἀρωγός· εἰ δὲ τε μὴ τελέοιτε, πυρός τότε τεῖσθε ποινάς· Χρηματισθεὶς ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος” This translation follows that of Várhelyi (2001), Graf (1992), and my own adaptations from Merkelbach (1991).
- 74 Graf (1992), p. 276. Formerly, natural disasters, such as these were attributed to the gods but, in the second century AD, it seems that these occurrences could be attributed to magic. He notes the exceptions of Cic. *Brut.* 217 and Pl. *Lg.* 11.932e; the public curse of Teus made against people who make deadly *pharmaka*. Oesterheld (2008), p. 200 also notes the *defixiones* of Teus. See also Farone (1991), pp. 165–205.
- 75 Várhelyi (2001), p. 17. She demonstrates that Claros presented the responses to correspond to the religious expectations of the five different cities which consulted Apollo in the second century AD regarding a plague.

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6 Occult practices: astrology

*Chaldaeis sed maior erit fiducia: quidquid
dixerit astrologus, credent a fonte relatum
Hammonis, quoniam Delphis oracula cessant
et genus humanum damnat caligo futuri.*

But trust in the Chaldeans will be even greater: whatever the astrologer has said, they will believe as sprung from the spring of Hammon, ever since the oracles of Delphi have ceased and obscurity of the future condemns the human race.¹

One of Juvenal's motives as a satirist was to ridicule and criticize his contemporaries at the end of the first century AD. However, the suggestion that his audience would have recognized the realities of his attack implies that there must be some basis of truth in his statements. His comment, made within the context of his discussion of the superstitions of women, shows that there was a developing form of divination used in lieu of the oracular centers – the practice of astrology. Furthermore, the words of the astrologer could carry the same weight, in Juvenal's time, as the oracular centers traditionally held, but no longer exercised. Juvenal seems to place Delphi above all other oracles and he appears to suggest that astrology had gained a degree of credibility, perhaps to the extent that Greco-Roman society had turned from Delphi and had begun to seek answers from astrologers instead.²

The decline of the most prestigious oracle in the Greek world is not an isolated phenomenon, indeed oracles throughout the Mediterranean eventually disappeared. Plutarch mentions the contemporaneous decline of several oracles in the vicinity of Delphi.³ This suggests that there must have been contributing factors which affected the operation of oracles, and were not necessarily specific to Delphi. The reasons for the disappearance of oracles may never be fully understood because they are multifaceted and varied. However, the reason they declined, and eventually vanished, is not due to a decrease in the desire to better understand divine will and the unknowable.

It is generally accepted that people have a deep psychological need for safety and an understanding of their world. They experience a fear of the unknown

and they hope for assistance in combating these anxieties; these feelings are timeless and not specific to the Archaic or Classical periods. Various methods were used to procure this arcane knowledge of one's fate in the ancient world; several had existed for centuries and continued to develop and gain followers throughout the Hellenistic and Roman eras. Particularly concerning in the first centuries AD was a soteriological awareness, and the desire for individuals to understand their own fate and seek security in the afterlife. Astrology and Christianity were newer forms of access to the divine. Magic, which had been practiced for centuries, gained an increase in popularity in the second century AD with the development of theurgy, a combination of ritual and magic which was solidified by the Neoplatonic philosophers. Significantly each of these institutions assisted different societal strata with access to divine knowledge: astrology and Christianity were used across the spectrum; magic by ordinary people; and theurgy by philosophers and learned men. Although these are generalizations, any of these practices could be used by a variety of people, and different levels of society would participate in these crafts in different ways. Often one's participation would be based on education and economic status. By offering an alternative which was accessible, as well as in tune with the philosophical and religious trends of the day, these new avenues to the divine helped, in a certain sense, facilitate the eventual obsolescence of oracles. The next two chapters examine how these developing practices offered alternative methods by which would-be patrons of the oracular shrine of Delphi could gain access to the divine world.

It is well understood that correlation does not imply causation, however, the connection between the rise of certain esoteric practices and the decline of oracular consultation does indicate a new mode of spiritual thought. It reflects a change in religio-psychological needs and a shift in the understanding of the nature of the divine, the ways in which it affects humanity, government, and an individual's relationship with these things. I am not the first to suggest that these forms of worship and divination contributed to the decline of Delphi, but here, I attempt to qualify these theories with evidence of preference, or at least potential preference, for astrological practices instead of Delphic consultation.⁴ Astrology offered novel and personal approaches to help facilitate the relationship between humanity and the divine. In the words of Kuhn, "new and unsuspected phenomena are, however, repeatedly uncovered" and these undermine the foundation of traditional approaches.⁵ In this sense, the rise in these occult practices, or, in other words, the development of new divinatory paradigms, assisted in the eventual decline of Delphi. People were increasingly interested in Fate, personal relations with the gods, different manifestations of the divine, new philosophies, rituals, and observations.

Although the idea of Fate goes back to Homer, there was an increasing interest in personal divine contact. This too begins early, with access to Mystery Cults at Eleusis in the Bronze Age. More of these religious institutions developed such as Isis and Mithras cults, which stress a personal relationship with the divine. These concerns were not sufficiently answered by traditional civic

religion, or by Apollo at Delphi. As society continued to develop and new religions, philosophies, and scientific thoughts were reaching a broader population, Delphi no longer occupied the central place in the Greek religious landscape. It was no longer the authority on all matters unknown. As new transcendental practices developed, the need for, and belief in, Delphi decreased.

In this chapter I present a brief history of astrology up to the first and second centuries AD. Despite the contribution of a variety of different cultures to the development of astrology, including significant Babylonian and Egyptian contributions, I focus on Greek influences. The emphasis of this chapter will be on the manner in which the different uses of astrology directly paralleled the roles of Delphic oracles, something which demonstrates the overlap of the two divinatory methods. This shows that it was at least possible that a potential consultant of Delphi could turn his attention to an astrologer and still have his divinatory needs satisfied. Next, an analysis of the use of astrology by Roman emperors shows that state concerns, such as succession and governance, were now entrusted to astrologers rather than oracles. This helps to explain why there were so few political consultations extant from Delphi during the Roman era. As I demonstrate, the emperors sought to use astrology for their own means and, at the same time, prohibit others from gaining access to the knowledge gained by astrology. The edicts passed to expel astrologers from Rome hint at the degree to which the craft had gained prevalence at Rome. Although the use of astrology by Roman emperors does not indicate a widespread practice of profession *per se*, nevertheless, their edicts do show that astrology was viewed as a threat to the emperor and thus, relatively prominent. Finally, after analyzing the different types of astrology, and the parallels seen at Delphi, I provide an explanation to help explain why people consulted astrologers whereas in the past they may have consulted the oracle at Delphi.

Seeking divine knowledge

The Greeks used oracles, not only for authority and sanction, but also to reveal that which was “unknown” to men. Often the consultant would have a pre-arranged notion to present to the oracle, simply to help decide the better course of action, and often it was focused on everyday concerns. But Xenophon’s account of Socrates’ opinion of oracles says: “in short, what the gods have granted us to do by help of learning, we must learn; what is hidden from mortals we should try to find out from the gods by divination,” for to him, it is in their grace that the gods grant a sign.⁶ If the decision was clear an oracle was unnecessary, but if it was outside human judgement, the gods should be consulted. In the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo*, the purpose of the Delphic oracle is also expressed explicitly:

Telphusa, here I intend to build a beautiful temple, to be an oracle for men who will always bring to me here unblemished hecatombs and as

many as dwell on fertile Peloponnesus and on Europe and throughout the sea-girt islands will consult it. It is my wish to give them unerring advice (νημερτέα βουλήν), making prophecies inside the lavish temple.⁷

Once Apollo's plan had been accomplished, he told his first officials that they "shall know the plans of the immortal gods."⁸ The function of the oracle, then, was to gain unfailing advice from the gods regarding various courses of action. It follows, therefore, that the religious officials at Delphi, through the words of Apollo, would be privy to divine knowledge. Apollo could, and should, be consulted on matters which fall outside the scope of human understanding – this is precisely the role astrology played in the ancient world. It is beyond coincidence that Delphi and other oracles began to decline just as astrology was becoming a relatively solidified system. Divination had always figured largely in ancient Greek and Roman societies. However, by the second century AD, as rationalism and philosophy started to infiltrate the masses, certain practices were questioned. Cumont explains, for example, that "in place of the old methods of divination, now fallen into discredit, of deceitful portents and ambiguous oracles, astrology promised to substitute a scientific method, founded on experience of almost infinite duration."⁹

Astrology: a brief history

One of the most significant reasons why astrology had so much authority is the consistency of the heavenly movements and the degree of observation which this allowed. This provided continuous and consistent data collection. The Chaldeans are credited with expertise in astral observation of perhaps not infinite duration, but, based on Cicero's sarcastic report, of four-hundred and seventy thousand years.¹⁰ The art certainly had the appearance of antiquity on its side. Time allowed people to observe the movements of the stars and planets and, over the years, develop predictions based on their interpretations of those movements. The earliest document attesting to the observations of the heavens and divination, based on the stars, dates to 2122–2102 BC and is written in cuneiform. The document concerns Gudea, a king who was instructed in a dream to build a temple in accord with the stars.¹¹

By 1800 BC, the Babylonians seem to have regarded the stars as divinities which were capable of influencing the affairs of men. This is suggested by the mention of extispicy, or *haruspicum* (the system of interpreting anomalous signs or patterns within a liver, or within the sky) alongside celestial nomenclature, in a Babylonian "Prayer to the Gods of the Night": "May the gods of the night, Shining Fire-star, heroic Irra, Bow-star, Yoke-star, Sitaddaru, Mushussu-star, Wagon, Goat-star, Goatfish-star, Serpent-star, stand by and put a propitious sign on the entrails of the lamb I am blessing now."¹² The prayer makes the connection between astrology and extispicy and reinforces the divinatory nature of astrology. Babylonians, Etruscans, Assyrians, Greeks, and Romans developed complex pattern-systems for interpreting signs by examining the

characteristics of organs of a sacrificial victim. These tools of observation and interpretation were easily transferred to the sky. They began to examine thunder, lightning, the orientation of the stars, and the division of the sky to find signs. It is not a far step from recognizing how the Sun influences the seasons, and extracting observations, to inferring heavenly bodies' relations to earthly events. Evidence for the practice of astrological divination is found at this early date in history and this was also a significant appeal of the craft – antiquity implied truth.

Predictions were tied to astrology from very early in its history. The *Enūma Anu Enlil* was a compilation of about 70 tablets, found in the royal archives in Nineveh, recording 7,000 odd omens and predictions. Preserved by the Assyrians after their conquest of Babylon, these texts reveal that sky-omens had taken priority over those revealed by extispicy and traditional divination.¹³ The propensity for astrological signs to trump traditional divination is a key element in what follows. The mystic and ancient nature of the art, along with consistent observation and a personal understanding of the influences of the heavens on the earth all contributed to astrology's spread and authority. This shows that astrology had the power, at an early stage, to supersede the traditional practices of divination.

As it was noted by McIntosh, it was the Babylonians who “invented the substance of astrology,” but, “it was the Greeks who gave it form.”¹⁴ After the developments of the Pre-Socratics and Aristotle, the increase of observations and contact with the east in the Hellenistic period allowed astrology to develop into a recognizable science. Indeed, recent research suggests that the overall character of Greek astrology has a unique character and rationale, but borrows necessary elements from Babylon.¹⁵ In lieu of the traditional forms of divination, astrology provided various means of revealing what was unknown to man, and the Greeks began to develop an astral theology of their own. The central feature of Greek astral theology is Fate (μοῖρα). Fate was thought to be the foundation of astrology and the notion was deeply ingrained in Greek belief. As far back as Homer, Fate was a cornerstone for how the Greeks viewed the workings of the universe.

There are many different manifestations of Fate within the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Of particular interest is the notion of the spinning of fate, by Moira or Aisa, which occurs in three instances in the epics.¹⁶ On each occasion the fate of the hero is sealed at birth. For example, Alcinous promises to bring Odysseus home safely, “but thereafter he shall suffer whatever Fate and the dread Spinners spun with their thread for him at his birth, when his mother bore him.”¹⁷ The idea that the fate of an individual was determined at birth is a long-standing Greek belief and one which is also central to astrology. In Herodotus, too, Fate is an essential aspect of the narrative – he mentions Fate (μοῖρα) in 55 passages.¹⁸ Many of the instances are portrayed as the result of divine causation, but the role of an individual's character also seems to be at play in his *Histories*. At least, the gods' direction of the cosmos and human nature coincide significantly.¹⁹ For example, Croesus' empire was “fated” to fall, but only in combination with

his arrogance and his inability to interpret the oracle from Delphi properly. Perhaps, if he had better understood Apollo, his “fate” would have been different. In a sense, this role of character is transferred, or mirrored, within the astrological model in regards to the nature of the planets. Each celestial body has its own character which coincides and interacts with others to produce a particular fate.

The role of Fate in astrology is just as essential as it was in traditional Greek thought. Manilius wrote an astrological poem, *Astronomica*, in the second decade of the first century AD and explains his narrative as follows: “By song I undertake to draw down from heaven the divine arts and the stars, knowledgeable of fate, which govern the diverse fortunes of men, a work of divine reason.”²⁰ Although Manilius is not a trained astrologer, his poem is certainly a reflection of the astrological thoughts of his day; he certainly had professional astrological sources at his disposal and is a valuable source concerning contemporary astrology in the first century AD. Here Fate is a central issue, not only in *Astronomica*, but to astrology as a whole. An essential cornerstone of the art was that of universal solidarity, *sympatheia* (συμπαθεία), or the idea that the cosmos was an interconnected web of influences. The fatalistic aspect of astrology is crucial – the cosmos is orderly and from this order certain things *must* arise uniformly. It is clear in Manilius that the orderly movements of the heavenly bodies were the result of the divine aspect of the universe. He says it “is not the work of chance, but the orderly arrangement of a great divinity.”²¹ The construction of the cosmos worked as regularly as clockwork and the ancients noticed the beauty and consistency of the phenomenon and attributed this to a divine influence, as can be seen from the very definition of κόσμος – order, ornament, decoration, embellishment, world or universe. It follows, then, that they would assume that this divine influence affected people on earth in just the same way that Fate had always influenced the lives of men. This is clear in Manilius, who wrote that: “Fate rules the world, all things stand fixed by its immutable laws, and the long ages are assigned a predestined course of events. At birth our death is sealed, and our end is consequent upon our beginning.”²² Cumont has observed that oracles become obsolete when people live within a system under which immutable fate is the ultimate determinant.²³ In oracular divination, there *must* be room for interpretation. This aspect of Fate may not be subject to change in the astrological model, but since it is consistent and observable, it follows that it is at least knowable. Astrology used mathematical calculations and astute observations to interpret Fate and, in this way, it was more reliable than the ambiguous traditional oracles.

Types of astrology and Delphic parallels

There are two main categories of ancient astrology. The first is “judicial,” which, in the words of Luck, “predicts from celestial or meteorological phenomena the future of the king or the country [whether there will be wars, famines, and floods, or good harvests, peace, and prosperity].”²⁴ The other is

“horoscopic” astrology which involves predictions concerning individuals. The categories are further divided into five different types, or forms, and each is addressed below. In a sense these distinctions parallel those divinations from Delphi – political or state consultations as distinct from the inquiries of individuals.

Genethliology

Genethliology, the most dominant form of Greek astrology, was common throughout the Roman Empire. It basically deals with the science of births and it foretells fate, fortune, or character based on the celestial configuration at the time of an individual’s birth.²⁵ This type is comparable to modern horoscopes and, although it was a common form of astrology, it frequently came under the attack of the sceptics such as Cicero and Sextus Empiricus.²⁶ Apprehensions about children, family, death, business, law, health, and character were all concerns for which the celestial bodies could be consulted. The most conspicuous way in which astrology was used to determine information about the life of an individual concerned the method of *dodecatropos* (δωδεκάτροπος), or the division into twelve parts (modern astrology describes these divisions as *houses*).²⁷ Each different “place” governs a different aspect of life and, depending on which planet rules each division, a different result is rendered. This distinction, which allows for ease in the interpretation of the celestial bodies, tells us something about the different types of issues that astrology was perceived as being capable of answering. Each concern has a corresponding *dodecatropos* and includes the planet which has special significance in that area and the human concern over which it presides. For example, the first *dodecatropos* is called Stilbon and it is presided over by Mercury. Offspring is the area of human experience over which it rules. Manilius says: “For its [Stilbon] nature has placed all fortunes of children and has made dependent on it the prayers of parents.”²⁸

A concern for progeny was also a favored topic of oracular consultation at Delphi.²⁹ Eëtion of Corinth (c. 685 BC) consulted Apollo about his lack of children, hoping the god could help him.³⁰ Apollo responded with the good news: “Eëtion, nobody honors you, though you deserve much honor. Labda conceives and will bear a rolling stone, which will fall among monarchs and will set Corinth right.”³¹ It is likely that astrologers were consulted about a desire for children as well as for their insight concerning the lives of future children. Another consultation at Delphi concerning the lack of children is demonstrated by Myscellos of Ripai in 705 BC. He asks about the birth of children and receives the response: “Apollo loves you and will give you children. But first he commands you to settle great Croton among fair fields.”³² Although these consultations are early, they show that Delphi had traditionally been consulted for this purpose. Another recorded response from Delphi regarding children dates to c. 360 BC. A husband asks Apollo if he will have children and Apollo responds: “He will have a child and should offer hair.”³³ We have less evidence for consultations regarding children at Delphi after this

time but more evidence for astrological consultation on these matters. This indicates that both Delphi and the cosmos could be consulted regarding children, but as Delphi's expertise in these matters became less authoritative, astrology was increasingly consulted. This similarity in consultation is something which is also apparent in other areas of oracular and astrological divination and it showcases the ways in which astrology could be used in lieu of Delphi.

A brief mention of sections regarding children in Ptolemy is warranted. The *Tetrabiblos*, the sequel to Ptolemy's astronomical *Syntagma* (or *Amalgamest*), is the most popular astrological book from antiquity and was written in the second century AD. In Book IV, Ptolemy writes:

As the topic of children follows upon that of marriage, we shall have to observe the planets that are in the mid-heaven or in aspect with it or with its succedant, that is the house of the Good Daemon, or in default of such planets, those connected with the diametrically opposite places and we must take the mood, Jupiter, and Venus to portend the giving of children, the sun, Mars, and Saturn to indicate few or no children...³⁴

Ptolemy's observations make it clear that astrology could be used to ascertain whether or not a family would have children, and it could even go so far as predict whether they would be healthy and successful. Likewise, it is notable that he mentions the "house of the Good Daemon," because at Delphi and in Mediterranean religion in general, complex cosmologies were developed to explain the workings of the universe. Once astrology developed, however, more emphasis was placed on the characteristics of divine planets, rather than on the traditional Olympian pantheon.

Marriage is another concern which falls under the purview of genethliology. The tenth *dodecatropos*, called Fortuna and ruled by the planet Venus, concerns marriage. Manilius tells us: "To the abode is fittingly given the power to govern wedlock, the bridal chamber, and the marriage porch; and this charge suits Venus."³⁵ It is important to note that the planet assumed many of the functions traditionally assigned to the goddess. Another astrologer agrees with this notion. Written in the fourth century AD, Firmicus Maternicus' book, *Matheseos*, is the final and most complete work on astrology from the classical world. Maternus describes an astrological chart in which the position of certain celestial bodies determines the number of marriages a particular person would have, as well as the status of the potential spouse:

...in all charts, if Saturn is found with Venus in the same sign and if Saturn has more degrees, this means one wife...Venus located on the descendant indicates a wife defiled by others; or they will live together without marriage tablets.³⁶

The range of different tools used by astrologers shows us that marriage was a central concern for many of the people consulting them. Various charts,

indicating the position of the planets and stars, could be consulted to determine different kinds of marriage, and the number of spouses an individual would have.³⁷ The Bianchini tablet, an astrologer's board found in fragments on the Aventine Hill in Rome in 1705 is one example. A remarkable feature of the marble board is that it has a double zodiac which was presumably used for considering potential or current marriages via the cosmos.³⁸ One of the zodiac rings is inscribed within an identical one surrounding it and this allowed for the comparison of planetary positions and the birth of both husband and wife simultaneously. It suggests that the astrologer would cast a nativity with dice.³⁹ In Ptolemy's discussion of the prediction of marriage, not only are the Sun and Moon incorporated within the prediction, but it appears that all of the planets could have an effect on, and determine, the type of wife an individual could have.⁴⁰

Marriage was also a concern common to consultants at Delphi.⁴¹ For example, when King Damagetos of Ialysos was anxious about getting a wife he turned to Apollo at Delphi and asked when he should get one. In answer, according to Pausanias, "the Pythia told him to take a daughter of the bravest of the Greeks."⁴² King Adrastos of Argos also consulted Apollo, in this instance regarding his concern for the marriage of his daughters. Apollo told him that he should marry them off to a boar and a lion.⁴³ It is noticeable that in both of these Delphic examples the consultants are given riddles and clues to solve before they can attain the desired result. This ambiguity was something which made interpretation of the oracle essential. Likewise, in astrology, there was a need for a learned astrologist to interpret the movements of the planets in relation to particular individuals. This specialization in prediction, perhaps, increased the authority of astrological consultations because an expert (complete with specialized tools) would give a sense of security and certainty to the inquirer. Wallace-Hadrill notes that from the Augustan age, astrology was preferred to traditional forms of divination because astrology is "a form of knowledge predicated on the application of rational principles to a highly complex body of material by professionals."⁴⁴

The Greeks maintained that the gods demonstrated their will in a cryptic manner and this allowed astrology to be more readily accepted. If a prediction was incorrect it was not the fault of the stars, but rather, an incompetent astrologer.⁴⁵ At Delphi, an incorrect prediction was viewed as a foolish interpretation. These parallels allowed for the easy incorporation of astrology within the framework of Greek thought. The gods were mysterious and only alluded to fate through signs, but if one was skilled enough, he could better understand the will of the gods. However, for the astrologer, authority was maintained through the use of calculations, charts, and observation.

It is clear that genethliology had corresponding interests as at Delphi. Since marriage and children were so essential to the individual, the clan, and the *polis*, it is no wonder that people sought advice about them from the gods. However, by the second century AD, astrologers were increasingly consulted. Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* gave credibility to their profession. During the first and second

centuries AD, fewer consultations of all sorts were coming from Delphi, but marriage and family continued to be a central concern. Although it is impossible to determine the degree to which astrology detracted from consultants at Delphi, it certainly offered a new interpretation of the divine will. In this way, astrology offered an alternative method for divination and challenged the traditional divinatory methods.

General astrology

Another form of astrology, general astrology, applied the same methods of genethliology to collective groups of peoples or cities. Rather than determining the fortunes, fate, and character of an individual, as genethliology does, general astrology focuses on entire communities. The connection is explained by Firmicus Maternus: “[N]othing in the individual charts of men should be seen as different from the birth chart of the universe.”⁴⁶ Under this model, the constellations and planets would be noted at the time of a city’s foundation and, based on their positions, predictions about the successes, triumphs, and tribulations of the colony could be determined. Significant factors in casting a horoscope, for an individual or a collective group, concerned the time of birth or foundation and the corresponding position of the planets. If the time occurred during the night, a nocturnal chart would indicate that the planets, Venus, Mars, Mercury, and the Moon were more influential and the Sun, Saturn, and Jupiter less so.⁴⁷ The positions of the planets were measured in relation to the ecliptic which is the apparent path of the Sun around the Earth, and each planet is assigned a characteristic. Then, the relative positions of the planets were seen to determine the fate of the individual or group concerned.

Ptolemy explains that a starting point is crucial for determining the influences of the cosmos. In terms of genethliological art, this is simple “since the chronological starting-point of human nativities is naturally the very time of conception, but potentially and accidentally the moment of birth...”⁴⁸ Likewise, regarding general astrology, a starting-point for observation and interpretation was key: the birth of a child, marriage, the foundation of a city, career prospects, or plagues could all be thought to begin at a certain point in time. This moment was used to determine the positioning and influence of the planets regarding a particular event.

Throughout Delphi’s history people would turn to Apollo for this sort of divine insight into an individual’s life, as well as that of a collective group. For instance, group concerns about plague, famine, or a ruler’s reign would usually be the concerns of a Delphic consultant or envoy.⁴⁹ An example of a parallel with general astrology is apparent in several responses from Delphi, as in, for instance, Argos’ fear for their city’s safety in 494 BC shows a concern for an entire community.⁵⁰ Indeed, several cities inquired at Delphi regarding their fate. Athens, in c. 400 BC, consulted Delphi to determine how the city could fare better and Apollo responded that if the citizens wanted good men in their city, they should put the finest thing in their children’s ears.⁵¹ The Athenians

misinterpreted Apollo, and put gold earrings in their children's ears, but the god really meant that they should acquire knowledge and learning. Like many Delphic oracles (for instance the Wooden Wall), one must think of them laterally, rather than literally. Two common themes are prevalent here: first, the authority of Delphi regarding important matters of state (on a variety of levels including individuals, families and the community as a whole), and, second, the essential act of interpretation. The parallels with astrological concerns suggest that the same issues could be dealt with by both oracles and astrologers. Many of the consultations on these issues, at Delphi, are from the Classical era, during the heyday of the oracle, but, by the second century AD, these concerns were not brought to Delphi with any frequency; rather, astrology began to offer advice on these matters on a regular basis.

Catarchic astrology

The Greeks also consulted the stars to determine the appropriate time to launch an enterprise, known as catarchic astrology.⁵² This form of astrology was attacked with far less frequency than fatalistic astrology (such as general and genethliological).⁵³ The determination of an auspicious time for an enterprise was precisely the aim of other divinatory techniques, particularly extispicy, so the practice was more familiar and less of a threat to traditional Greek religion. Xenophon describes the practice of extispicy before heading into battle as necessary in order to determine whether or not the campaign was auspicious.⁵⁴ The decision as to whether a certain action was appropriate was far less presumptuous than prediction. It involved a choice between two options only, rather than an infinite range of possibilities. Likewise, Apollo was consulted before the colonization of a city or the commencement of war, and by individuals curious about which direction to take in their personal lives.⁵⁵ Although general astrology often offered predictions, catarchic astrology offered advice, as at Delphi.

The clearest parallel between oracles and catarchic astrology is seen from the foundation of cities. Both oracles and astrology sought to advise on the establishment of cities and colonization. In the early days of astrology's popularity, astrologists were consulted on the founding of cities. Seleucus Nicator founded Seleucia after consulting the Magi.⁵⁶ Additionally, cities could seek information, derived from the stars, concerning their destinies, and so city horoscopes became popular. Rome is said to have been "born when the Moon was in the sign of Libra and from that fact unhesitatingly prophesied her destiny."⁵⁷ Plutarch continues this story, agreeing that Tarutius cast a horoscope for Romulus "and that Rome was founded by him on the ninth day of the month Pharmuthi, between the second and third hour: for it is thought that a city's fortune, as well as that of a man, has a decisive time, which may be known by the position of the stars at its very origin."⁵⁸ Although both Plutarch and Cicero concede that these stories are fabulous, they still earn a place in their writings and this shows that their audiences would have been interested in the tales and one can

assume from the subject matter that the audience was the intelligentsia. Plutarch notes that the story would attract readers for their amusement rather than offend them for their fabulousness.⁵⁹ A century and a half earlier, Cicero was writing during a time when astrology was becoming increasingly popular, as can be seen from the plethora of astrological references in writings from this time.⁶⁰ His opinion, in Book 2 of his discussion on divination, reflects the climate of Rome during his day – astrology was used and was powerful, but the prediction of the course of a city's destiny was ridiculous: "*O vim maximam erroris!*" He then points out the absurdity of horoscopic astrology: "Did all the Romans who fell at Cannae have the same horoscope? Yet all had one and the same end. Were all the men eminent for intellectual and genius born under the same star?"⁶¹ This was a typical argument against astrology. Centuries later, Ptolemy counters this argument by pointing out that celestial causes of general effects are more powerful than those celestial influences that have an impact upon individuals.⁶² It is not a terribly convincing argument but he does offer explanations to many of Cicero's objections. Plutarch and Cicero probably reflect standard opinions of their respective centuries – astrology was prevalent, but it still did not have universal support and the aristocracy and upper-class citizens, in particular, associated astrology with the lower classes, and thus mocked the system.

Although the sentiments of Plutarch and Cicero may appear to demonstrate that astrology had no place within intellectual circles, many great minds did approve of the art. For example, one of the most famous contemporary experts on astrology during the Late Republic was Publius Nigidius Figulus, a good friend of Cicero, who wrote a treatise on astrology and mathematics, which has not survived.⁶³ Cicero himself employs astrological notions in his writings; although he does not uphold the practice of astrology, he concedes that various celestial bodies bring different fortunes to individuals based on their position.⁶⁴ This shows that opinion on astrology was polarized in antiquity, and both the masses and the intelligentsia could subscribe to the craft. During the two hundred years between Cicero and Plutarch, astrology developed both in terms of technical details and in its ability to defend against criticism.⁶⁵ Popular stories about the efficacy of astrology circulated for Cicero and Plutarch to record. The extensive debates regarding astrology provide further evidence for the popularity of the craft. By the time of Plutarch, it had developed into a worthy opponent for many to criticize and, as Parker has pointed out, "the society that abuses diviners is the society that consults them."⁶⁶

The practice of astrology by higher levels of society is demonstrated by the fact that several other cities, aside from Rome, had their horoscopes cast. The destinies of Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, Gaza, Caesarea, and Neapolis were a matter for celestial speculation.⁶⁷ In the case of Constantinople, the Emperor Constantine consulted an astrologer who helped him give shape to his new seat of empire at the ceremonies of inauguration.⁶⁸ Much significance was attached to the foundation of cities where, in earlier times, Delphi had been the ultimate arbiter for matters of colonization. By the Hellenistic era, astrology had taken over this role and Delphi no longer exercised the supreme authority.

It is noteworthy that the cities mentioned above are largely in the east and this is not surprising. Astrology would have had much more influence than Delphi in these areas. Although there is a significant difference between colonization and imperial foundation, astrological authorities were still sought to sanction the foundation of a new place; the planets had to be consulted on such a significant occasion.

The founding of colonies and ruling power was certainly the subject of oracular inquiries during the Archaic and Classical periods. For example, the Delphic oracle was a key component in Herodotus' tale of the foundation of Cyrene by Thera in c. 639 BC.⁶⁹ Indeed, Delphi had a pivotal role in colonization for the Greeks. Yet when astrology was on the rise, oracles were consulted for much more mundane matters. Delphi issued its last colonization oracle in 385 BC when the Parians were told to found a colony on the island of Pharos in the Adriatic.⁷⁰ In addition to the authoritative sanctioning role, Delphi also provided a symbolic role: tying the colonies at the extremities of the Greek world back to the center, the *omphalos*. Admittedly, the decline in oracular consultations regarding colonization is probably reflective of a general decline in new colonization, due to the fact that the Mediterranean had, by this time, been largely settled. Still, astrologers were consulted for the foundation of cities and Hellenistic dynasties, as mentioned above, demonstrating a shift in authority regarding these matters. The sanction of new cities was still a necessity, but the sanction could now come from an astrologer, rather than the Pythian Apollo.

Delphi could be consulted for additional reasons which also fall under the category of catarchic astrology, for instance, consultations could be made concerning the commencement of a war or battle. Particularly well attested is Delphi's role in the Persian Wars – Greeks and Persians alike consulted Apollo about their fate in battles. The Persian general, Mardonios, asked Apollo how he might be successful in capturing Hellas.⁷¹ Added to this, the famous story of the Wooden Wall, which Herodotus also relates, demonstrates the oracle's crucial role in the decisive battle of Salamis.⁷² Delphi and astrology both had the potential to answer the same sorts of inquiries, thus offering their inquirers a similar service. This suggests the possibility that people turned from Delphi to astrology for the same type of advice.

Interrogatory astrology

Interrogatory astrology gave answers to various questions with reference to celestial construction.⁷³ Although it concerns the current position of the planets, this type of astrology was, as at Delphi, concerned with events in the past, present, and future. For example, interrogatory astrology asks questions such as “will this happen?”, “when is the best time for this to happen?” or even “what happened?”⁷⁴ This form is further removed from the determinism of both fatalistic and catarchic astrology and is more reliant on omens than predictions. For example, the auspicious positioning of the planets would give a positive response to the question, “will this happen?” In this respect, interrogatory

astrology was more concerned with the individual, and thus well suited to the lower class, as discussed below. However, states could employ this type of astrology retroactively to determine what caused an event. A chart could be consulted, and what actually occurred could be compared with the prediction, thus, giving some insight into the cause-and-effect nature of the universe.

The corresponding Delphic consultations are numerous: questions concerning children, spouses, and family in general are good examples.⁷⁵ Delphi is particularly famous for sanctioning questions such as “is it better or more good for X...” and it is likely, in these instances, that the plan in question had been decided upon before consulting Apollo. For example, Isyllos the poet asked Apollo whether or not he should inscribe the paean he composed in honor of Apollo. The god responded that it would be better for both present and future that he inscribed the paean.⁷⁶ This illustrates the capacity of Delphi to answer questions which have a parallel in interrogatory astrology. Less often, Delphi gave predictions, answers to questions in the sense of “will this happen?” One example of this involved King Akrisios of Argos who asked if he would have a son. Apollo responded that the king will not have a son, but Danaë will, and her son will kill him.⁷⁷ Delphi was sought for predictive advice but, more often, the oracle relied on sanction and prescription. Similarly, astrology often relied on particular omens rather than predictions to indicate the will of the gods. Indeed, it is this form of astrology that was more universally accepted, rather than the predictive horoscopes.

Interrogatory astrological consultations appear to have had a broader degree of adherence from the lower classes. This is not typical of Delphic consultation, which was largely on behalf of the elites or entire communities. Astrology was pervasive through all levels of society – from the “court astrologers” at Rome, to the “street astrologers” – with a variety of skilled astrologers in the middle.⁷⁸ The “street astrologers” are found throughout the literary evidence and are not happily accepted. Cicero portrays Quintus’ disapproval of the astrologers of the circus (*de circo astrologi*), along with other “street diviners” and says that they “are not diviners either by knowledge or skill.”⁷⁹ The passage suggests that these practitioners were fakes, attempting to trick people out of their money. Indeed, one of the characteristics of these lower class astrologers is that they charged a fee. These astrologers gained a reputation as tricky charlatans since, as Potter observes, “the typical horoscope that a person could expect to receive from an astrologer on the street was, not surprisingly, less detailed.”⁸⁰ So, although this class of astrologer is largely seen in a negative light, there is evidence supporting the ubiquitous existence of astrology throughout Rome in the first and second centuries AD.⁸¹

Juvenal gives further evidence for a widespread use of astrology. He mentions Tanaquil, the wife of Tarquinius Priscus, and her consultation of astrologers, and goes on to describe other more general consultations by women:

If the woman be of humble rank, she will promenade between the turning-posts of the Circus, she will have her fortune told, and will present her

brow and her hand to the seer who asks for many an approving smack. Wealthy women will pay for answers from a Phrygian or Indian augur well skilled in the stars and the heavens, or one of the elders employed to expiate thunderbolts.⁸²

It is clear to Juvenal that rich and poor women alike consulted astrologers, the only variation being the expense and the quality of the product rendered. As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, Juvenal's sixth satire critiques the ways of women, so, this passage should be interpreted as a stereotype of all women, highlighting their superstitious beliefs. However, the satire must also reflect the reality of society, on some level, otherwise the effect of the critique on society would be lost. Given the context, it seems that the consultation of astrologers was viewed in a negative sense, as a woman's fancy, or perhaps this could be seen as a reflection of women's limited access to divination in most other contexts. Yet, it still attests the use of astrology by people of differing social status, something which further demonstrates the widespread use of the art.

Astrology seems to be perceived negatively, in terms of its use in the lower levels of society more than at the higher levels. However, the art does not appear to have been entirely discredited in society simply because it was used in lower-level practices. Rather, skepticism could be reduced because an upper-class person could still utilize astrology, but would hire one of the best astrologers complete with professional charts and books.⁸³ The lower class would still consult astrologers because they were available and promised precise and infallible knowledge, but would seek a more affordable option. This widespread base of practitioners would also have helped to decrease skepticism: individual incidents of disconfirmation would not have corroded the system.⁸⁴

Further evidence for the practice of astrology, at a variety of social levels, is demonstrated by its popularity, which became far more apparent in the first century AD. This is evidenced by the increasing frequency with which astrology is mentioned in the literature. One of the foremost astrological works which survive, as noted above, is the *Astronomica* by Manilius, which was written during the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius. Although it is not an astrological handbook, the didactic hexameter poem does discuss the philosophical aspects of astrology. Because of this, one could not use the work to learn to cast a horoscope, but would, rather, be invited to learn more about the profession. Manilius was not a specialist astronomer by trade. It is unlikely that he was well versed in the mathematics and science of the art but, instead, was a *poeta doctus*, who was familiar with the various fields of knowledge of the day. Commenting on this, Volk has noted: "Such a learned amateur can be expected to reflect the mainstream culture of his time rather more faithfully than a specialist."⁸⁵ This poem would have given astrological access to non-specialists and, in turn, helped to spread the craft throughout society on a more general level.

Astrology could cater to a variety of social levels, as could the oracle at Delphi – from the state consultations regarding foundations of cities, the reigns of kings and emperors, war, and state-wide agricultural concerns, to issues

regarding family, such as children and marriage. Finally, advice on matters that regarded individuals directly was sought from astrologers and from Delphi.

Iatromathematics

The medicinal side of astrology involved the identification of certain parts of the body with the corresponding zodiac signs. Manilius describes how “the parts of the human frame are distributed among the constellations, and how the limbs are subject each to a particular authority: over these limbs, out of all the parts of the body, the signs exercise special influence.”⁸⁶ Under this model, presumably, if an ailment affected an area, a check on the various positions of certain corresponding celestial bodies could aid diagnosis. Vettius Valens, an astrologer from Antioch who wrote his astrological *Anthology* at the end of the second century AD, also contributes to the medicinal side of astrological theories of the time. One of his chapters, “Concerning the time a person takes to bed ill and the inception of events,” describes the necessity for star-reckoning when a person is sick. This allowed for the proper interpretation in relation to the complaint.⁸⁷

People consulted astrology on all aspects of life, including personal health, and this would have inspired people to seek astrologers to gain a better understanding of their ailments. Delphi and other oracles were also often consulted on matters of health, disease, and plague.⁸⁸ Apollo’s son, Asclepius, was considered to be the authority on medicinal healing, but Apollo was also consulted in these matters.⁸⁹ In one example, Apollonia in Illyria sent an envoy to Delphi to determine what caused the famine and sterility in the city after Euenios had been blinded.⁹⁰ The interpretation of the oracle was that the gods had blinded him because he had offended them and the whole city suffered as a consequence.

Questions concerning death are closely tied with medical inquiries. Types of astrological practices were employed to determine when or how a person would die. Indeed, the practices of predicting the deaths of emperors became such a problem that laws against astrology were implemented – it was treason to consult an astrologer about these matters.⁹¹ Delphi, too, was consulted frequently regarding different aspects of death and dying. An overwhelming percentage of the extant Delphic responses concern the dead – 54 of the total 519 (10.4%).⁹² Delphi offered recourse for people to understand the relationship between the dead and the living and many went there to learn how to cope with this phenomenon. Delphi also offered insight into the relationship between the *community* and the dead. Astrology, on the other hand, offered insight into an *individual’s* relationship with the dead and their own death. In addition, since Fate sealed one’s death at birth, astrology could, in theory, predict the moment of one’s death. Delphi could also predict death but, more often, Apollo was consulted *after* an individual’s death. In this case, the oracle’s function was to adjust the relationship between the dead and living, rather than to give insight into the future.⁹³

Astrology and Roman emperors

Augustus was the first of the emperors to embrace the practice of astrology, although eminent Romans such as Sulla embraced the practice previously.⁹⁴ Early in Augustus' reign he "went with his friend Agrippa to visit Theogenes, the astrologer, in his gallery on the roof," and, after a bit of persuasion, had his horoscope cast.⁹⁵ Theogenes assured him that he would rule the empire and this satisfied Augustus to such an extent that he minted coins depicting the Capricorn, his astrological sign, and had his horoscope officially published. The horoscope predicted a favorable position for Augustus. The claim that Augustus' fate "was outlined in the stars was a profoundly monarchical action, which contradicted the claims he made to be restoring the Republic."⁹⁶ Augustus' use of astrologers, for his own political means, set a precedent for other emperors to do the same. His expulsion of the astrologers was aimed at limiting many from using this method to challenge his power.

Midway through his reign, Augustus' interest in astrology was seen again. In 12 BC, he commissioned a project as Pontifex Maximus, on the Campus Martius, which was eventually completed when he was aged 63.⁹⁷ The venture included the construction of a *horologium*, or sundial, that used an Egyptian obelisk to mark the position of the cosmos at the time of the emperor's birth.⁹⁸ This conspicuous contraption would show his horoscope to all of Rome. This was an act which would have created a standard for the rest of Imperial Rome to follow – the personalization of horoscopes and astrological predictions. Augustus' patronage of astrology certainly helped to popularize the practice, at least amongst the Roman upper classes. However, in AD 11, towards the end of his life, Augustus had an edict passed which prohibited both astrological consultations in private and those concerning the death of an individual.⁹⁹ The aim of this law was to protect himself from others exploiting the practice from which he had benefitted; he was threatened by their access to this privileged information. It is significant that it was made at a time when he must have been aware of his own impending death. This edict was not an isolated move to control divinatory practices in order to maintain control: he also had large numbers of Sibylline Books and other divinatory texts burned, while the remainder was strictly controlled by the state.¹⁰⁰ It is clear that as Augustus was ageing, he guarded himself from the influences of divination by outsiders. According to MacMullen, Augustus, along with most emperors, believed in "the efficacy of the arts they proscribed" and "wanted no meddling with their own stars or lifelines."¹⁰¹ This edict is very significant because it was the first legislative policy to uphold the powers of astrological prophecy and, in a sense, it gave the art imperial sanction as a viable method to divine knowledge.

Many other decrees against astrologers were seen at Rome; from 33 BC to AD 93, there were at least ten attempts to remove astrologers from Rome. Most were aimed directly at astrologers but only four concerned astrologers alone.¹⁰² This suggests that many of the decrees were focused on removing anti-Roman entities, ones that threatened the established, traditional ways in

Rome – Italians, prostitutes, Jews, Greeks, and other non-Romans were included in many of the expulsions.¹⁰³ Many emperors passed legislation against astrologers. Their intention was to rid Rome of any threat to traditional religion and the *status quo*, however, at the same time, they utilized astrologers for their own purposes. The emperors clearly regarded their skills as valuable, something to protect and be protected from. It was this fear of astrology “falling into the wrong hands” that motivated the expulsion of many astrologers over the years. Several emperors used astrologers for their own personal matters and also employed them in their court.

The most explicit evidence for an imperial preference for astrology, over traditional forms of divination, is seen in relation to Tiberius. Like his predecessor, Tiberius was also interested in astrology at a young age. In fact, when his mother Livia was pregnant with him, she consulted astrologers to determine if her child would be a boy and Scribonius, the astrologer, “predicted great things of him when he was a mere child.”¹⁰⁴ Granted, this demonstrates his *mother's* interest in astrology, as well as the interest of Suetonius. Still, Suetonius demonstrates the influence of astrology on Tiberius' reign through these early childhood stories. He was the first emperor to have a court astrologer – Thrasyllus. He grew to be greatly addicted to astrology, and was fully persuaded that all things were governed by fate.¹⁰⁵ He even became a practicing astrologer himself. Although Tiberius was well versed in the movements of the heavens, he did not consider himself an astrologer and so was exempt from the edicts he passed against the astrologers. He “expelled the astrologers; but upon their suing for pardon, and promising to renounce their profession, he revoked his decree.”¹⁰⁶

The evidence concerning Tiberius' penchant for astrology illustrates Cumont's observation that “the ancient forms of divination... had fallen somewhat into disrepute at the beginning of our era, like the rest of the Greco-Roman religion.”¹⁰⁷ As Suetonius relates, Tiberius disregarded the traditional religions, viewing them with indifference, in favor of astrology and the role of fate which governs all things.¹⁰⁸ This is one indication that astrology was gaining prestige while traditional religions were becoming less important. The decline of the oracles was one facet of the change. It perhaps seems contradictory, since many of the Roman emperors also dedicated so much time and expense into the rebuilding of several traditional places of worship. However, this may not necessarily be evidence of belief in these institutions, but rather a political tool to tie oneself to the past which was a necessary act within Roman politics.¹⁰⁹

The scientific nature of astrology is an important factor which helps to explain this shift. It had parallels with traditional divination and people in the Mediterranean were familiar with astrological phenomena and its influence on their lives. This, combined with the deeply ingrained notion of Fate, allowed astrology to supersede traditional methods of divination. The evidence is meagre but it is clear that astrology *could* provide an alternative to oracular consultation and did, to a certain extent, for both men and women of all classes. Evidence of astrological consultation, during the early centuries AD, is greater

than that for oracular inquiry during the same period. Rather than utilizing Delphi, Roman authorities used astrology far more frequently to assist in their decision-making. It is arguable, therefore, that although correlation does not imply causation, the increased acceptance of astrology may have contributed, to some degree, to the decline of the oracle of Delphi.

Astrological authority

There are five main reasons *why* astrology gained appeal within a divinatory context in Greece and Rome as compared to Delphi. First, the similarity of the craft with traditional forms of divination was essential for the transition into the rational realm of science. The role of Fate, already a familiar view of the universe, was critical for both astrology and traditional divination. Astrology could answer the same sorts of questions as those answered by Delphi during its most successful eras of operation. The need for guidance regarding these questions never diminished, but new ways of addressing these problems developed, with the result that Delphi was no longer the ultimate authority in all matters divine.

The second reason concerns the familiarity, on the part of the Greeks, with the importance of celestial movements. Quite early in Greece, the positioning of the stars was of the utmost significance. Hesiod mentions the rising of certain constellations and their associations with farmer's crops and planting cycle, "and almighty Zeus sends the autumn rains, and men's flesh comes to feel far easier – for then the star Sirius passes over the heads of men, who are born to misery, only a little while by day and takes greater share of night..."¹¹⁰ There is even some evidence which suggests that the rising of certain stars might have been a determinant for the design and construction of some Greek temples. Penrose, on a tour of Sicily and Greece in 1900, gathered information regarding the role of the heavens in relation to the construction of Apollo's temple at Delphi. He noted that at least two temples had been built and a different star alignment was considered before the construction of each.¹¹¹ The older temple relied on the constellation Canis Major (which contains Sirius, the brightest star in the night sky) setting towards the south-western axis, while the later temple was aligned with the setting of β Lupi. It seems clear that the positioning of the cosmos was considered when initiating a city or a building – this would actually apply to Apollo's temple.

Delphi had further connections with astrology which made it easier and more acceptable for people to turn to astrology rather than Apollo for answers. In fact, there is some evidence which suggests that the positioning of stars helped to determine the auspicious days for oracular consultation at Delphi. Salt and Boutsikas have postulated the theory that *poleis* all over the Greek world would have known the proper days to consult Apollo at Delphi based on the rising of the Delphinus constellation.¹¹² Since different calendars were used all over Greece, the stars were a helpful and necessary method of time reckoning. If this theory is correct, Apollo at Delphi sanctioned the use of astrology and employed it for divinatory practices. The work of Penrose

indicates that, if Apollo's temple had been built with the movements of the stars in mind, it would not be surprising if the time of consultations was also determined by astral calculations.

Support for this idea is provided by Lucian of Samosata who was writing in the second century AD. He claims that "certainly their [the Greeks'] oracles were not aloof from astrology."¹¹³ Granted, this small work is a mock eulogy of judicial astrology, however, it reflects contemporary thought in Greece. Perhaps it also provides further evidence that Delphi and other oracles utilized the stars to a greater degree than was once assumed. Lucian describes the connection between oracles and astrology:

At Delphi a virgin has the office of prophet in token of the celestial Virgin, and a serpent gives voice beneath the tripod because a Serpent gives light among the stars, and at Didyma also the oracle of Apollo has its name, I think, from the heavenly Twins.¹¹⁴

Lucian's association of the oracular centers with zodiac signs may stem from knowledge of the use of astrological phenomena at the sanctuaries. Greek oracles seem to have incorporated various forms of astrology into their practice either in terms of temple construction, time reckoning, or even symbolic association. The last, which dates to the second century AD, a time when astrology was becoming so popular, suggests that perhaps people were attempting to graft this new science onto their old way of thinking. This thought process would not only make adherence to astrological ideas simple and understandable, but it would also give oracular credibility to the new craft. The mention of astrological phenomena alongside oracular institutions would help to promote astrology through an established authority, and would give people a framework with which to understand it.

The third reason for the appeal of astrology to the Greek mind concerns the role of interpretation. Elucidation of divine will was akin to the traditional practice of divination, but, in the case of astrology, put into the hands of a professional. Delphi was famous for ambiguous oracles and the Pythia was even expected to couch her responses in cryptic language.¹¹⁵ This point is illustrated by a fragment of Heraclitus, an Ionian writing at the end of the fifth century, which reads: "the Lord whose oracle is at Delphi neither reveals nor conceals, but gives a sign."¹¹⁶ Heraclitus' meaning is clear – the oracle gave divine knowledge to men, not at face value, but in a way which was intended to be interpreted. This highlights the nature of knowledge itself, but it also characterizes the nature of oracles as summed up by the famous Delphic maxim, to know thyself – reflection is necessary. Socrates gives us a quintessential example of this notion: when the Pythia told him he was the wisest of all, Socrates asked: "What is the god saying, and what meaning does he intend by this riddle?"¹¹⁷ Socrates was indeed a wise man, according to Delphi, because he internalized the oracle and was, at the same time, self-reflective. To the ancient mind Delphi was not meant to give clear and direct answers but to conceal the exact nature of divine wisdom.

As philosophy, mathematics, and observation became more prevalent in society throughout the centuries, astrology offered something Delphi could not – greater certainty. In this way, astrological predictions and observations became anomalies within the paradigm of traditional religion. The cosmos was becoming more rational and orderly and this challenged the role of the Olympian gods. Although astrology is not an exact science by today's standards, as Neugubauer has noted, "compared with the background of religion, magic, and mysticism, the fundamental doctrines of astrology [are a] pure science."¹¹⁸ In an age where reason was becoming more valued, certainty of predictions was esteemed more highly than the cryptic oracles of the Archaic and Classical periods. Astrology had on its side mathematical calculations and the proven success of several astronomical predictions such as eclipses.¹¹⁹

Ultimately, the consistency of the heavens and the development of mathematical calculations used to determine the movements of the planets and stars assisted in astrology's appeal. Gordon states that astrology was superior to "the traditional forms of divination practiced by the ancient state," because of its rational and objective knowledge.¹²⁰ With antiquity and mathematics on its side, astrology offered competition to Delphi. Astrological predictions became a new paradigm, while offering new ways to gain information and challenging traditional oracular divination, which was unable to make such scientific predictions. People had long recognized the influence of the Sun and Moon on their lives, particularly in the agricultural context. With the popularization of astrology, society became more aware of how the movements of celestial bodies had an impact on them as individuals. The more precise the measurements and mathematics became, the notion that an astrologer *could* correctly interpret the heavens became more convincing.

Finally, the popularity of astrology is attested in many forms. Its use by Roman emperors is important, yet confined. Once Rome became the ultimate authority in Greece, decisive political and religious questions were not directed to Delphi. Instead, political leaders surrounded themselves with the expertise of astrologers. The success of astrology is demonstrated by the fact that several Roman emperors turned increasingly toward astrologers and used them in addition to Rome's own traditional methods of divination such as the Sybilline books or augury.¹²¹ The fascination astrology held for many of the Roman emperors could help to explain the lack of consultations at Delphi on behalf of the state. Although there is little direct evidence for astrological state consultation on behalf of emperors, many astrological queries concerned succession, which can be considered a political matter.¹²² Personal matters were also a central concern, like at Delphi – even important political figures inquired about personal matters at Delphi. Although Romans did consult Delphi, once they had significant influence in Greece, the power of decision-making rested with Rome rather than other Greek *poleis* and Roman leaders seemed to prefer astrological authority.

The correlation between Delphi's decline and the rise of astrology cannot be a matter of pure coincidence. They shared parallels of service and both

specialized in consultations regarding family, cities, death, and disease. Indeed, the traditional forms of divination, which were once universally respected, had declined by the first centuries AD because of the new methods. These new rational, mathematical calculations developed and spread which allowed astrological authority to thrive in a society which had adopted a more rational mindset. Astrology offered more exact access to the divine and this appealed to the mindset of the first, second, and third centuries AD. Explanations of Fate were far more regulated, much like the movements of the planets, and Delphi's ambiguity and uncertainty no longer gave sufficient answers to society's questions.

Both traditional oracular divination and astrological prediction could answer important questions. People in ancient Greece desired this sort of knowledge and relied on a higher power to gain guidance in these matters. It is impossible to determine the exact degree to which astrology lured consultants away from Delphi, but it is clear that there was a decline in consultation, particularly on important communal matters, around the time that astrology gained popularity and authority in Greece and, particularly, at Rome. Additionally, there is a clear correlation between the sorts of inquiries presented to both forms of divination.

In view of the growing popularity of astrology, theurgy was another developing course of divination. The developing science of astrology taught people that the world was governed by immutable Fate and they felt hopeless before it. Theurgy was also dependent on this notion. During the first centuries AD, certain psychological and religious needs developed from this fear of Fate, the fact that Fate could be measured, uncertainty of the afterlife, and curiosity regarding the supernatural. Delphi was not specialized in these concerns, and was not equipped to deal with these new questions, many of which arose from astrology's insistence on Fate. If astrology was correct, in that the world was governed by Fate, and that the course of the cosmos determined everything, then what recourse did people have to influence this? The answer was Neoplatonism and theurgy, a system of practice which allowed people to bend and manipulate the gods and Fate to their own will, a topic to which we now turn.

Notes

- 1 Juvenal, *Satires* 6.553–556, K. Heineman trans. Astrologers are variously called by the sources: *mathematici* (Suet. *Vit.* 14.4, Tac. *Ann.* 12.52), *Chaldaei* (Mos. et Rom. *Legume coll.* 15.2.1), ἀστρολόγους (Dio Cass. 49.43.5), *astrologus* (Suet. *Nero* 36.1) or γόητες (Dio Cass. 52.36.3).
- 2 Tacitus' story of Lollia Paulina (*Ann.* 12.22.) juxtaposes astrology and magic with the established oracle of Claros which suggests they were equally viable forms of divination, see Chapter 5 (pp. 128–129).
- 3 Plut. *De Pyth.* or. 408b–c; Plut. *De def. or.* 411f–412d and 414b–c; the oracles of Amphiaraus and Ptōion as well as the oracle at Tegyrae are mentioned. The region of Boeotia in general is the area to which they refer. Also, Strabo (17.43.1) mentions the decline of a number of oracles. See Chapter 2.

- 4 P&W, p. 375 suggest an influence of astrology on Delphi. For the connection between astrology and the decline of traditional divination, see Cumont (1956); Levin (1989); and Parke (1967) who also suggests the rise of theurgy may have assisted in the decline of oracular divination.
- 5 Kuhn (1970), p. 52.
- 6 Xen. *Mem.* 1.1.9, “ἔφη δὲ δεῖν, ἃ μὲν μαθόντας ποιεῖν ἔδωκαν οἱ θεοί, μανθάνειν, ἃ δὲ μὴ δῆλα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐστί, πειρᾶσθαι διὰ μαντικῆς παρὰ τῶν θεῶν πυνθάνεσθαι.” E.C. Marchant trans. Xenophon makes it clear that the gods help those who help themselves; for example, attempting to gain a better insight to a situation by consulting the gods.
- 7 Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* 3.247–253, “Τελφοῦς· ἐνθάδε δὴ φρονέω περικαλλέα νηὸν, ἀνθρώπων τεύξαι χρηστήριον, οἳ τέ μοι αἰεὶ, ἐνθάδ’ ἀγινήσουσι τεληέσσας ἑκατόμβας, ἡμὲν ὅσοι Πελοπόννησον πείραν ἔχουσιν, ἦδ’ ὅσοι Εὐρώπην τε καὶ ἄμφιρῦτους κᾶτα νήσους, χρησόμενοι· τοῖσιν δέ τ’ ἐγὼ νημερτέα βουλὴν, πᾶσι θεμιστεύοιμι χρέων ἐνὶ πτόνι νηῶ.” A.N. Athanassakis trans.
- 8 Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* 3.480, “βουλὰς τ’ ἀθανάτων εἰδήσετε.” This has become the standard Greek impression of Delphi.
- 9 Cumont (1960), p. 76.
- 10 Cic. *Div.* 1.19, compare to Diod. Sic. 2.31 and 17.112.2; Diodorus (2.31) says that the Chaldeans have been observing the stars for 473,000 years. Although Cicero is pointing out the nonsense of this notion, it is well known that several centuries of observation are needed before the consistencies of heavenly bodies can be revealed; additionally, that people in Cicero’s day must have held this belief.
- 11 See Barton (1994a), p. 11.
- 12 Dossin (1935), p. 279.
- 13 Barton (1994a), p. 12–13. See also McIntosh (1969) and van Soldt (1995).
- 14 McIntosh (1969), p. 15.
- 15 For Babylonian contributions to Greek astrology, see Rochberg-Halton (1984) and (1988). For Greek contributions and development of Greek astrology, see Lindsay (1971), Cumont (1960), McIntosh (1969), Goldstein and Bowen (1983), and Barton (1994a).
- 16 *Il.* 20.127; 24.209 and *Od.* 7.196. See also Dietrich (1962).
- 17 Hom. *Od.* 7.196, “ἐνθα δ’ ἔπειτα, πείσεται, ἄσσα οἱ αἶσα κατὰ κλῶθές τε βαρεῖαι, γιγνομένῳ νήσαντο λίνῳ, ὅτε μιν τέκε μήτηρ.” A.T. Murray trans.
- 18 Shapiro (1996), pp. 348–364.
- 19 Immerwahr (1954) and Lateiner (1977). However, Lloyd-Jones (1983) and Lang (1984) argue that divine intervention and divine direction of Fate is the sole vehicle behind significant events in Herodotus.
- 20 Manilius, *Astronomica* 1.1–4, “*carmine divinas artes et conscia fati sidera diversos hominum variantia casus, caelestis rationis opus, deducere mundo aggredior...*” K. Volk trans.
- 21 Manilius, *Astronomica*, 1.531, “*non casus opus est, magni sed numinis ordo.*”
- 22 Manilius, *Astronomica*, 4.14, “*fata regunt orbem, certa stant omnia lege longaque per certos signantur tempora causus. Nascentes morimus, finisque ab origine pendet.*”
- 23 Cumont (1960), p. 180.
- 24 Luck (1985), p. 310. Ptolemy (*Tetrabiblos* 2.1) describes these concerns as general inquiries.
- 25 Beck (2006), p. 9.
- 26 Cicero, *De Fato* 8.15; Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos* 5.2 called astrology δεισιδαιμονία. Many writers upheld the doctrines of astrology, particularly Manilius, Vettius Valens, and Ptolemy.
- 27 See Barton (1994a) for an extensive glossary of ancient astrological terms.
- 28 Manilius, *Astronomica* 2.937–949, “*in qua fortunam natorum condidit omnem natura, ex illa suspendit vota parentum.*”
- 29 P&W R6, 43, 55, 107, 110, 148, 156, 157, 190, 249, 250, 331, 334.

- 30 Hdt. 5.92b.
- 31 Hdt. 5.92b; P&WR6, “Ἡετίων, οὔτις σε τίει πολύτιτον ἔοντα. Λάβδᾳ κύει, τέξει δ’ ὀλοοίτροχον· ἐν δὲ πεσεῖται, ἀνδράσι μουνάρχοισι, δικαιοῦσαι δὲ Κόρινθον.” A.D. Godly trans.
- 32 Diod. Sic. 8.17; P&W R43, “Μύσκελλε βραχύνωτε, φιλεῖ σ’ ἐκάεργος Ἀπόλλων, καὶ γενεὰν δώσει· τόδε δὲ πρότερόν σε κελεύει, οἰκῆσαι σε Κρότωνα μέγαν καλαῖς ἐν ἁρούραις. J. Fontenrose trans. King Laios of Thebes also asks about how he may come to have a son (P&W R148, 372); as well as King Akrisios of Argos (P&W R156), King Xuthos of Athens (P&W R190), Croesus (P&W R249). These myths reinforce Delphi’s role in supplying information on families and children.
- 33 P&W R334, “[φοῖ]βος γενεάμ μαντεύμασι δῶκεν εὐχῆς ἔξαιων, κομίσαι τε κόμας προσέταξεν.” J. Fontenrose trans.
- 34 Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 4.6, “Ἐπειδὴ δὲ τῷ περὶ γάμου τόπῳ καὶ ὁ περὶ τέκνων ἀκολουθεῖ, σκοπεῖν δεήσει τοὺς τῷ κατὰ κορυφὴν τόπῳ ἢ τῷ ἐπιφερομένῳ, τουτέστι τῷ τοῦ. ἀγαθοῦ δαίμονος, προσόντας ἢ συσχηματιζομένους, εἰ δὲ μή, τοὺς τοῖς διαμέτροις αὐτῶν, καὶ σελήνῃ μὲν καὶ Δία καὶ Ἀφροδίτῃ πρὸς δόσιν τέκνων λαμβάνειν, ἥλιον δὲ καὶ Ἄρη καὶ Κρόνον πρὸς ἀτεκνίαν ἢ ὀλιγοτεκνίαν...” F.E. Robbins trans.
- 35 Manilius, *Astronomica* 2.918–927, “*propria est haec reddita parti vis, ut conubia et thalamus taedasque gubernet: haec tutela decet Venerem, sua tela movere.*”
- 36 Firmicus Maternus, *Matheseos*, 7.12, “*In omnibus genituris si Saturnus cum Venere in eodem signo fuerit inventus, siquidem plures Saturnus habuerit partes, unam decernit uxorem... Venus in occasu constituta, id est in ab horoscopo loco, ab aliis stupratam dabit uxorem, aut sine tabulis matrimonialibus coibunt.*” J.R. Bram trans.
- 37 Firmicus Maternus, *Matheseos*, 7.9–19.
- 38 Evans (2004), p. 7.
- 39 For more evidence for the Bianchini tablet as a dice board, see Gundel (1918).
- 40 Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 4.5.
- 41 P&W R189, 373, 523, 531.
- 42 Paus. 4.24.2, “ἔχρησεν ἡ Πυθία θυγατέρα ἀνδρὸς τῶν Ἑλλήνων τοῦ ἀρίστου λαβεῖν.” W.H.S. Jones trans.
- 43 P&W R189, 373.
- 44 Wallace-Hadrill (2005), pp. 64–65. See also Evans (2004).
- 45 Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 1.2.
- 46 Firmicus Maternus, *Matheseos*. 3.2, “*prorsus ut nihil ab ista mundi genitura in singulis hominum genituris alienum esse videatur.*” Likewise, Ptolemy (*Tetrabiblos* 2.3–4) asserts that predictions concerning general conditions of countries or cities are similar to those of individuals.
- 47 Barton (1994a), p. 115.
- 48 Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 3.1, “Ἀρχῆς δὲ χρονικῆς ὑπαρχούσης τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων τέξεων φύσει μὲν τῆς κατ’ αὐτὴν τὴν σποράν, δυνάμει δὲ καὶ κατὰ τὸ συμβεβηκὸς τῆς κατὰ τὴν ἀποκύψιν ἐκτροπῆς.”
- 49 For plague see P&W R13, 27, 58, 113, 114, 125, 150, 155, 158, 179, 199, 207, 209, 237, 291, 332, 353, 376, 386, 405, 479, 485, 487, 499, 504, 530, 540, 542, 545, 552, etc.; for famine see P&W R10, 27, 28, 83, 108, 169, 210, 211, 293, 305, 388, 385, 390, 409, 419, 487, 529, 556, 569, 570, 571; and for the reign of rulers see P&W R69, 87, 143, 226, 316, 439, 507, 518, etc.
- 50 Hdt. 6.19 (P&W R84) See also P&W R73. This is the so-called epicene oracle; Herodotus offers no interpretation of the response. Pausanias (2.20.10) interprets the victory of women over men from the story of Telesilla. After the Argive defeat at Sepia, the poetess armed the Argive women and saved the city.
- 51 P&W R578.
- 52 Reiner (1985), p. 593.

- 53 See Long (1982) for a summary of the arguments.
- 54 Xen. *An.* 6.4.22. There are several instances of the Spartans consulting the gods before battle: see Thuc. 3.89.1; 6.95.1; Xen. *Hell.* 3.2.24. This is also seen frequently in the campaigns of Alexander: see Diod. Sic. 17.112; Just. *Epit.* 12.13.3–5; Plut. *Alex.* 73.1–2; and Arrian 7.16.5–18.6. See also Goodman (1986). Contra, see Finley (1983) who doubts the degree to which religious beliefs were taken seriously in ancient Greece.
- 55 For the colonization of a city, see P&W R2, 48, 72, 133, 159, 137, 225, 341, 384, 567. See also Forrest (1957), Malkin (1987), and Dougherty (1992) for discussion. For the commencement of war see P&W R19; 53; 76; 82; 86; 166; 203; 236; 297; and for personal assistance see P&W R233, 415, 417, 421, 523.
- 56 App. *Syr.* 9.58. Alexander sought the advice of diviners regarding the foundation of Alexandria (*Arr.* 3.2–16.5), but not Chaldeans specifically. He did, however, seek their advice at other junctures during his campaigns, see Diod. 17.112.2; Strabo 16.1.5; Curtius 3.3.10, 4.4.6.
- 57 Cic. *Div.* 2.47.98, “...in iugo cum esset luna, natum esse dicebat, nec eius fata canere dubitabat.” W.A. Falconer trans.
- 58 Plut. *Rom.* 12.6, “κτισθῆναι δὲ τὴν Ῥώμην ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ τῇ ἐνάτῃ Φαρμουθι μηνὸς ἱσταμένου μεταξύ δευτέρας ὥρας καὶ τρίτης. ἐπεὶ καὶ πόλεως τύχην ὥσπερ ἀνθρώπου κύριον ἔχειν οἴονται χρόνον, ἐκ τῆς πρώτης γενέσεως πρὸς τὰς τῶν ἀστέρων ἐποχὰς θεωρούμενον.” B. Perrin trans.
- 59 Plut. *Rom.* 12.6. Additionally, the presentation of these stories suggests that they were known, and perhaps popular.
- 60 Barton (1994a), p. 38. For example, Manilius, Lucretius, even Virgil (*Georgics* Book II), and Horace (*Carmen Saeculare*) have several astrological undertones. Lucretius describes the workings of the universe as guided by chance, rather than the intervention of traditional Roman gods, *De Rerum Natura* (5.107); Manilius’ poem demonstrates the propensity of astrological notions within society in a larger context. Barton notes (p. 63), “The second century AD appears as the age in which astrology flourished, with most of the major literature coming from this period.”
- 61 Cic. *Div.* 2.47.99. “omnesne qui Cannensi pugna ceciderint uno astro fuerint? Exitus quidem omnium unus et idem fuit. Quidqui ingenio atque animo singulares, num astro quoque uno?”
- 62 Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 2.1.
- 63 Plut. *Cic.* 20. He was a praetor in 58 BC, and supported Cicero during the Catilinarian conspiracy. Cicero was aware of Figulus’ interest in “occult” arts; he refers to it in the introduction of his translation to Plato’s *Timaeus* (Cic. *Tim.* 1), see Long (1982), p. 171 n. 20.
- 64 Cic. *De Rep.* 6.17.
- 65 Many of the objections raised by Cicero (*De Div.* 2.44–47) continued to be the main arguments against astrology, particularly by St. Augustine (*De civ. D.* 6.2–6), who also employs the argument of twins (twins shared the same birthday, but had different fates). Ptolemy, in particular, was one of the staunchest supporters of astrology and in the opening chapters of *Tetrabiblos* he counters many of the arguments put forth by Cicero.
- 66 Parker (1985), p. 302.
- 67 Cramer (1945), p. 11. See also CCAG 9.2:177–179.
- 68 Alföldi (1947), p. 16.
- 69 Hdt. 4.150–156.
- 70 P&W R177.
- 71 Hdt. 8.141, but he only mentions the story the Spartans heard. It was the Scholiast that mentions that Mardonios received the oracle. See Fontenrose (1978), p. 320 for discussion.

- 72 Hdt. 7.141.3–4; see also Thuc. 1.14.3 and Plut. *Them.* 10.2.
- 73 Beck (2006), p. 10.
- 74 Burk (2001), p. 6.
- 75 See P&W R6, 43, 107, 110, 111, 189, 334, 335, 373, and 523.
- 76 IG 4².128.
- 77 P&W R156. Another example is P&W R505. When the Achaeans consulted Delphi at the beginning of the Trojan War, Apollo declared that, the Greeks would win and take Troy in ten years' time. This was originally spoken by an individual seer in legend; it was only later attributed to Delphi.
- 78 Ripat (2011), p. 123. Examples of the "court astrologer" can be seen from Balbillus, the astrological advisor to Nero (Suet, *Nero* 36.1), or Thrasyllus the astrologer of Tiberius (Suet, *Tib.* 14.4). However, as Ripat points out, this group of astrologers is difficult to define (perhaps Hadrian's uncle or even Titus could be included). The broad definition of astrologer helps to relieve the dual attitude regarding imperial expulsion of astrologers; one's knowledge and practice of astrology does not necessarily make one an astrologer.
- 79 Cic. *Div.* 1.132, "*non enim sunt ei aut scientia aut arte divini.*" The astrologers in this passage are mentioned within a long list of undesirables; see Klingshirn (2006).
- 80 Potter (1994), p. 19. Most modern scholars agree. See Barton (1994a) and Beck (2006).
- 81 However, Cato the Elder's *De Agri Cultura* was written in the second century BC, and already demonstrates a criticism of astrology – one should not consult astrologers (Cato *Agri.* 5.4). Despite the attack on the profession, it shows a prevalent use of the practice and the setting warns against the use of astrology on behalf of the duties of farm management, quite comfortably regarded as middle class. A similar sentiment is found during the Augustan age, Horace (*Od.* 1.11) says, "Ask not (it is forbidden knowledge), what our destined term of years, Mine and yours; nor scan the tables of your Babylonian seers" (*Tu ne quaesieris, scire nefas, quem mihi, quem tibi finem di dederint, nec Babylonios temptaris numeros*), N. Rudd trans.
- 82 Juvenal, *Sat.* 6.582–591, "*si mediocris erit, spatium lustrabit utrinque, metarum et sortes ducet frontemque manumque, praebebit vati cerebrum poppysma roganti. Divitibus responsa dabit Phryx augur et inde conductus, dabit astrorum mundiue peritus atque aliquis senior qui pulica fulgura condit. Plebeium in Circo positum est et in aggere fatum. Duae nudis longum ostendit cervicibus aurum consulit ante falas delphinorumque columnas an saga vendenti nubat caupone relicto.*" S.M. Braund trans.
- 83 As seen by the application of the hierarchy of means theory as developed by Evans-Pritchard's (1937), p. 96–113.
- 84 Ptolemy *Tetrabiblos* 1.2; see Gordon (1997).
- 85 Volk (2009), p. 11. This gives us valuable information regarding the general understanding of astrology during this time. Support for astrological belief in every-day Roman life comes from the writings of Petronius, and the explicit astrological connotations at Trimalchio's dinner party; some of the courses at dinner are arranged to resemble certain zodiac signs. See Petronius *Satyricon* 30; 35; and esp. 76.
- 86 Manilius, *Astronomica* 2.453–465, "*Accipe divisas hominis per sidera partes singulaque imperiis propriis parentia membra, in quis praecipuas toto de corpore vires exercent.*" The same description appears again at 4.704–9. The body is divided into twelve parts for astrological purposes. Aries is the head; Pisces is the feet, Scorpio is the groin, Capricorn dominates the knees and so on. See Manilius, *Astronomica* 2.446–471.
- 87 Vettius Valens *Anthology* 9.5.
- 88 On health see P&W R39, 108; for disease see P&W R50; and for plague see P&W R207, 209, 210, 237, 291, 332, 353, 376, 405, 478.
- 89 For accounts of Asclepius and his healing, see Edelstein and Edelstein (1998). Claros also had some ties with healing, see Herrero (1989).

- 90 P&W R108.
- 91 Barton (1994a), p. 42. See Tac. *Ann.* 2.27–32. Also Arrian (7.18) describes one of Alexander's marshals who consulted a haruspex out of fear for his own life. For edicts against astrologers, see below.
- 92 Johnston (2005), p. 283. According to her calculations, this is more than any other single matter: colonization only comprised 7.5%, war 6.5%. She disagrees with Fontenrose's calculation of cult foundation comprising 15%, as many of them overlap and are too broad. Therefore, one of Delphi's main roles was aiding in understanding the relationship between the living and the dead.
- 93 Johnston (2005), pp. 299–300. On predicting death see P&W R156. On consulting Delphi *after* a death see P&W R101, 114, 131, 208, 259, 300, 446, 473, 520, 546, and 572.
- 94 Plut. *Sulla* 37.1 describes how Sulla consulted astrologers regarding his own death.
- 95 Suet. *Aug.* 94, "*Theogenis mathematici pergulam comite Agrippa ascenderat, cum Agrippae...*" A. Thomson trans. Suetonius was very interested in omens and predictions see for instance *Tib.* 14; *Calig.* 19 (an astrologer predicts Caligula's death), 57.1; *Ner.* 40.2 (various astrologers predicted his success, and others, his downfall); *Oth.* 4.1 (Otho was told by an astrologer that he would become emperor); *Vit.* 14.4 (the attempt on behalf of his parents to avoid any horoscope, regarding their son, being cast); and *Dom.* 10.3, 15.3 (both instances of Domitian's putting someone to death was because of an imperial nativity).
- 96 Barton (1994a), p. 41. Many of the predictions given to men of power, both astrological and oracular, seem to give the answer they wanted to hear, like Alexander the Great at Siwah.
- 97 Bowersock (1990), pp. 385–386.
- 98 Potter (1994), p. 146.
- 99 Dio Cass. 57.25.5.
- 100 Suet. *Aug.* 31.1.
- 101 MacMullen (1966), p. 131.
- 102 Cramer (1954), p. 234.
- 103 For Marcus Agrippa's edict in 33 BC, see Dio Cass. 49.43.5; 52.36.1–2, MacMullen (1966), Cramer (1945), McIntosh (1969), and Barton (1994a). For the trial of Libo Drusus in AD 16, see Shotter (1972). For Tiberius' legislation, see Suet. *Tib.* 36 and Cramer (1954). For the legislation in AD 52 and the expulsion of Furius Scribonianus, see Tac. *Ann.* 12.52 and MacMullen (1966). For expulsions of astrologers and the revolt of Vindex, see Cramer (1954), p. 237 and Dio Cass. 63.22.1–2; Suet. *Vit.* 14. For the expulsion by Domitian, see Barton (1994b), p. 156 and Suet. *Dom.* 15; Dio Cass. 67.16.3 gives a slightly different version. For the most recent treatment of the expulsion of astrologers from Rome, see Ripat (2011).
- 104 Suet. *Tib.* 14, "*Ac de infante Scribonius mathematicus praeclara spopondit, etiam regnaturum quandoque, sed sine regio insigni, ignota scilicet tunc adhuc Caesarum potestate.*" A. Thomson trans.
- 105 For Tiberius' practice of astrology, see Dio Cass. 55.11.1 and Suet. *Tib.* 69.
- 106 Suet. *Tib.* 36, "*expulit et mathematicos, sed deprecantibus ac se artem desituros promittentibus veniam dedit.*" Tiberius banned astrologers at the same time he was suppressing all foreign religions, prostitutes, and other perceived threats to Rome, so it should not be assumed that it was a direct attack on astrology. Rather, Tiberius' edict was for political reasons, particularly in light of the conspiracy of Libo Drusus. See Cumont (1956); Shotter (1972), Barton (1994a), and Ripat (2011).
- 107 Cumont (1956), p. 162.
- 108 Suet. *Tib.* 69, "*Circa deos ac religiones neglegentior, quippe addictus mathematicae plenusque persuasionis cuncta fato agi...*"
- 109 Nicolet (1991), p. 193.

- 110 Hes. *Op.* 415–418, “ὄμβρήσαντος, Ζηνὸς ἐρίσθενέος, μετὰ δὲ τρέπεται βρότεος χρῶς, πολλὸν ἐλαφρότερος: δὴ γὰρ τότε Σείριος ἀστήρ, βαῖον ὑπὲρ, κεφαλῆς κηριτρεφῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἔρχεται...” H.G. Evelyn-White trans. The star Sirius is associated with the fate of men as early as Hesiod. See also Hes. *Op.* 479.
- 111 Penrose (1893) and (1901). Many temples were built facing east, taking into account the closest star of all.
- 112 Salt and Boutsikas (2005), p. 564.
- 113 Lucian, *De Astrologia* 23, “καὶ γὰρ δὴ τὰ μαντήια αὐτέοισι οὐκ ἔξω ἀστρολογίης ἦν.” K. Kilburn trans.
- 114 Lucian, *De Astrologia* 23, “ἀλλὰ παρὰ μὲν Δελφοῖς παρθένος ἔχει τὴν προφητεῖν σύμβολον τῆς παρθένου τῆς οὐρανίης, καὶ δράκων ὑπὸ τῷ τρίποδι φέγγεται ὅτι καὶ ἐν τοῖσιν ἀστροῖσι δράκων φαίνεται, καὶ ἐν Διδύμοις δὲ μαντήιον τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος, ἐμοὶ δοκέει, καὶ τοῦτο ἐκ τῶν ἡερῶν Διδύμων ὀνομάζεται.” It is notable that the Pythia was not a *parthenos* (παρθένου), but an older woman who wore young maiden’s clothes to represent a chaste virgin, see Diod. 16.26. Lucian and Clement of Alexandria (*Portr.* 3.45), suggest that the etymology of Didyma arises from *Didymoi* (twins), referring to the twin deities, Apollo and Artemis or perhaps the Dioscuri. Others suggest a double hill, or a double temple, but there are no such features at Didyma. Fontenrose (1988), pp. 3–5 summarizes these accounts and concludes they are false etymologies. He suggests that the name is not Greek, but Carian; “we need only look at Carian place names – Idyma, Kibyma, Loryma, Sidyma – to realize that Didyma on the Carian coast has the same ending.”
- 115 Harrison (2002), p. 149; see also Thgn. 805–810; Pind. *Ol.* 12.10–18; Aesch. *Ag.* 1255; Eur. *Supp.* 138 and *Med.* 674.
- 116 DK22B93; Heraclitus *Phil. Ephesius*, fr. 93 line 2. “ὁ ἄναξ, οὗ τὸ μαντεῖόν ἐστι τὸ ἐν Δελφοῖς, οὔτε λέγει οὔτε κρύπτει ἀλλὰ σημαίνει.” W. Harris trans.
- 117 Pl. *Ap.* 21b2–5. “τί ποτε λέγει ὁ θεός, καὶ τί ποτε αἰνίττεται;” H.N. Fowler trans.
- 118 Neugebauer (1957), p. 171.
- 119 Barton (1994b), p. 151–152. Famously, Thales of Miletus was purported to have predicted an eclipse. See Lloyd (1971). Although eclipses are not entirely comparable with astrology, the constancy of the cosmos and man’s ability to make predictions from this could be extended to the lives of men. Additionally, the success rate of astrology must have been substantial to persist as long as it did.
- 120 Gordon (1997) p. 145. See also Manilius (4.913–14) and Konstan (1997).
- 121 Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.9, notes that already by his time “the augural lore has been forgotten, and the reality of the auspices has fallen into contempt, only the outward show being retained; and in consequence highly important departments of public administration, and in particular the conduct of wars upon which the safety of the state depends, are carried on without any auspices at all...” (*Sed negligentia nobilitatis augurii disciplina ommissa veritas auspicioꝝ spreta est, species tantum retenta; itaque maximae rei publicae partes, in his bella quibus rei publicae salus continetur, nullis auspiciis administrantur, nulla perennia servantur, nulla ex acuminibus, nulli viri vocantur ex quo in procinctu testamenta perierunt; tum enim bella gerere nostri duces incipiunt, cum auspicia posuerunt*), H. Rackham trans. Although the office of the augur was still greatly respected and an integral aspect of the Republic, by Cicero’s day, traditional civic religion was already beginning to deteriorate.
- 122 Suet. *Ner.* 40.3, for example.

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7 Theurgy and soteriology

ἐνθους ὁ Σύρος, πολυμαθὴς ὁ Φοῖνιξ.

The Syrian is divinely inspired; the Phoenician is knowledgeable.¹

This verse, attributed to the Delphic oracle and dating from c. AD 300, refers to Iamblichus (the Syrian) and Porphyry (the Phoenician). Neoplatonic philosophers such as these provide most of our information regarding theurgy and the Chaldean Oracles, sophisticated philosophical developments which arose in response to new social and religious circumstances in the second, third, and fourth centuries AD.² The above response is one of the few extant from Delphi which allude to the new theological, philosophical, and metaphysical concerns of the day. Although the response honors the philosophers who deal directly with the issues, it stops short of giving divinely sanctioned views on the actual questions of theology and philosophy. The response demonstrates that Delphi respected the Neoplatonic philosophers through its oracles, and additional material evidence of honorific inscriptions to other philosophers reinforces this trend.³ However, as we shall see, it appears that the Pythian Apollo was not consulted for advice in matters of theurgy, but the sanctuary was certainly aware of the trend and lent support to the philosophers. Delphi honored the philosophers as a source for information, rather than positioning itself as an expert in these matters. In the past, the oracle tended to develop various religious, moral, and cultural notions through its pronunciations, but now the driving force was external to Apollo. Delphi demonstrated respect for these men as their influence was increasing, and the sanctuary attempted to associate itself with the new developments. The inclination of Delphi to align its oracular responses with these men and their views shows us that the philosophers had considerable influence in the Greek world. It is likely that this respect resulted from their interest in, and involvement at, Delphi, as well as their religious teachings which seemed to better satisfy the new spiritual and intellectual climate.

This chapter will explore the shift in religious and spiritual mentalities which began in the second century AD and continued throughout antiquity, particularly among the educated elite. The shift was from the traditional, civic religion

to a more personalized one, in which many people turned towards individual salvation and personal connection with the divine. I examine the practice of theurgy – first by distinguishing it from other common magical practices. Then, I consider several ancient authors, particularly Iamblichus and Porphyry and their notions of theurgy and divination. From there, I analyze the beliefs of the Neoplatonists, culminating in the form of the Chaldean Oracles. Finally, I will examine the soteriological aspects of Christianity which were also prevalent during this time. This examination will highlight the new religious and philosophical climate which was prevalent in the third and fourth centuries AD. This is exemplified by the Neoplatonic philosophers and their teachings – a new way of thinking that diminished the need for oracular consultation at Delphi.

Greek religious practice, at both the individual and state level, always involved direct contact, and contract, with the gods, be it through sacrifice, prayer, Mystery cults, or oracles. In other words, the ritual was the point of connection with the divine – orthopraxy, rather than orthodoxy was key. However, a shift in religious authority was seen in the second and third centuries AD – from state institutions, such as oracles, to individuals, such as philosophers and holy men.⁴ These new trends were largely distinct from the practices of the *polis*, as they were centered on the individual, rather than the community. This shift led to, and was influenced by, the development and codification of certain techniques that provided worshippers with the tools in their quest for direct and personal connection with the ultimate divine entity. The practice was known as theurgy (θεουργία), a term derived from θεο- meaning “god,” and ἔργον meaning “work.” It denotes divine works, as opposed to divine words (θεολογία), and was not a merely speculative endeavor but, rather, involved a practical use of knowledge.⁵ Theurgy, then, is a particular form of magic, and indeed, theurgy was criticized in antiquity as magic, but Iamblichus went to great lengths to maintain that theurgy was a virtuous path to the divine, completely different from magic, which is associated with fraudulent practices.⁶

Magic and theurgy: a distinction

Before addressing the ancient theurgists, it is important to distinguish the practice of theurgy from that of “magic,” in the more traditional sense, which it closely resembles.⁷ One of the distinctions between common magic and theurgy is that the former often used formulae with a religious connotation for immediate, temporal, and terrestrial goals, whereas the latter used magical practices solely for religious ends. For instance, an individual would often consult a magician (γόης) if he or she desired to win a competition or the affections of a loved one. The primary aim of the theurgist was to ensure the ascension of the soul (ἀναγωγή) and its unification with the divine, through purification and salvation of the individual soul.⁸

One feature of theurgy was unique: that which involved the ascension of the soul through personal preparation, including contemplation and prayer. The

other facet, directed towards the physical world, involved practical goals which were accessed through ritual and much more akin to magic. Modern scholars have variously categorized theurgy into several main types which operate on two distinct levels.⁹ The first way an individual reaches purification and salvation of the soul is through philosophical contemplation; in the other, the use of theurgic ritual facilitates ascension. Rosán creates new distinctions of his own: he divides the practice into “higher” and “lower” theurgy.¹⁰ Higher theurgy, as Rosán describes it, is employed to gain unification of an individual soul with the divine by means of faith and philosophical contemplation, through which an individual soul can, in a sense, reach self-awareness. Lower theurgy is defined as a method to stimulate the soul toward its *own* unity, by means of a pre-existing sympathy or connection between human souls and material objects. These symbols can include plants, stones, the names of gods, and even numbers and words. Certain aspects of theurgy were like those of magic, such as the use of magical stones, statues, and other paraphernalia. Those practices that depend on the use of symbols (σύμβολα) have as their primary goal animating statues to obtain divine knowledge or oracles from them.

Theurgy and magic also differed in terms of the control of the process. In the case of magic, it was the practitioner who controlled the rituals and outcomes and thus he or she attempted to respond to Fate and divine will. This was a direct attempt to manipulate the gods. The practice of theurgy, on the other hand, was controlled by the divine. The soul could only become united with the divine at the behest of the gods and the individual’s job was simply to prepare it for the journey.¹¹ Although the practitioners of both arts summoned the gods, the theurgist’s method was given directly by the gods. Yet both practices somehow compelled the gods to their service. Much like sacrifice in traditional religion, the gods were implored to carry out an action through certain rituals and objects in both magic and theurgy – magicians would use amulets or *pharmaka* to elicit their desired spell, whereas theurgists would use symbols and tokens to animate the statues of the gods. The general thought, on the part of the intellectual elite, was that magicians used this form of compulsion (ἀνάγκη) in a malicious way. In contrast, “the willingness of the gods to descend” was what made theurgy possible.¹² In a sense, theurgy was a contractual system based on mutual respect, whereas magic was viewed more as a one-sided manipulation of the gods. Modern scholars debate whether the term “compulsion” qualifies if the gods were indeed thought to be willing participants.¹³ Added to this, the notion that the gods were “willing” is debatable, particularly in light of Porphyry’s evidence. He tells us that Apollo is assaulted by prayers and is *forced* down to reveal his truths to his worshippers until, finally, he begs them to leave him alone.¹⁴ Iamblichus defends the gods by asserting that the necessity to listen to the prayers and invocations of men *emanate* from the gods themselves, rather than from any external force.¹⁵

A further distinction between magic and theurgy is that some of the traditional magical practices were prohibited by the Chaldeans. Most importantly, Chaldean theurgists denounced certain forms of prophecy, such as astrology,

haruspicy, and augury. Iamblichus tells us that Porphyry thought that learning one's horoscope would liberate that persona from Fate.¹⁶ He goes on to counter this assertion, by distinguishing astrology as a divinatory art (μαντική τέχνη), which is a useless technique, compared to divine prophecy (ἡ θεία μαντική), as practiced by theurgists. Despite his criticisms of the art, astrology continued to be practiced and even adopted by many of Iamblichus' students, perhaps because it was more observably successful.¹⁷ This aspect does not necessarily deny that theurgy and the Chaldean Oracles were in competition with Delphi. First, oracular centers are not mentioned alongside the unacceptable forms of divination and prophecy. Second, the forms listed are all artificial forms of prophecy; theurgy and Delphi both incorporate natural divination, in which the gods speak directly to, or through, the theurgist or medium.¹⁸ Indeed, as Addey has demonstrated, "theurgy included divination as one of its most central elements."¹⁹ We now turn to theurgy, its practitioners, beliefs, methods, and motivations. Here I highlight the new dimension of divination and contact with the divine which occurred during the final years of Delphi's operation.

Chaldean Oracles

The practice of theurgy ties in closely with a compilation of doctrines. The Chaldean Oracles are a set of hexameter verses "handed down by the gods" (θεοπαράδοτα) to a father-and-son team, both named Julian, who are distinguished by their epithets: Julian the Chaldean and Julian the Theurgist, respectively.²⁰ Both lived during the reign of Marcus Aurelius in the latter part of the second century AD. The term "Chaldean" does not appear in any of the extant fragments so, perhaps, it was assigned later by an external commentator.²¹ In either case Iamblichus, Proclus, and the tenth-century *Suda* all agree that Julian the Theurgist wrote the Oracles in hexameters and lived during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, while his father, the Chaldean, was a philosopher.²² These Oracles are divine revelations which divulge a moral system based on rituals of purification, trance, sacred objects, magical formulae, and prayer, each containing cosmological elements and, above all, salvation remedies. Furthermore, prescriptions for certain cults, as well as the magical evocation of the gods, are found within the corpus of fragments. Perhaps they were composed in this form so as to be associated with the former prestige of oracles from sanctuaries such as Delphi.

The Oracles have been regarded as the "holy book" of paganism.²³ Perhaps it was this codification that provided a foundation for theurgy to spread, in contrast to traditional Greek religion, which was more of an amalgamation of rituals and practices. This provided theurgy with a reference for practitioners to consult and was uniform for everyone. These texts seem directed toward an audience already cognizant of the details of a theurgical experience, which suggests that a mentor, or spiritual guide, was essential to theurgy. This too would allow for a greater connection to the practice through a community of fellow theurgists, as well as guidance. The formalization, in terms of a circulated dogma and the need for a mentor, offered a new form of religious

experience – although interpretation was still necessary, it was facilitated by a text and a teacher. Brown has noted that, “the holy man merely trumped the oracle, by being both objective and trenchant in an idiom that was more consonant with the habits and expectations of a new, more intensely personal style of society.”²⁴ Indeed, a theurgist could be thought of as one of these holy men. In this way, theurgy offered something that Delphi did not – direct assistance seeking personal contact with the divine.

The Chaldean Oracles, as they survive, are comprised of about 350 lines organized into 190 fragments, and found in the writings of the Neoplatonists, particularly Proclus and Damascius.²⁵ Both of these men were born after the final closing of Delphi in the fifth century AD and it is their somewhat contradictory interpretations of the Oracles which we now possess. Despite the late date of writing, the Oracles, as mentioned above, are the product of the second century AD father-and-son team; the fragments are then preserved by these later authors. Indeed, traces of theurgy are detectable in Porphyry (AD 234–c. 305) and Iamblichus (AD 245–c. 325). The Neoplatonic cosmology, which heavily influenced theurgy, is a development of many Platonic ideas. Johnston has observed that the Neoplatonists “implicitly assumed that the Oracles could be used as direct proof concerning the wishes of the gods, although they sometimes found it necessary to ‘interpret’ these divine utterances in ways that conveniently suited their own ideas.”²⁶ However, the methodology of the ancient writers is not of concern here: it is the Oracles themselves that are necessary to our understanding of the shift in religious thought during this time. It is crucial to examine the Oracles to understand *to what* consultants were turning when they turned away from Delphi. The fundamental practices and beliefs of theurgy have been pieced together from the fragments of the text. I turn first to the practice of theurgy, as found in the Oracles and Neoplatonists, before returning to the Oracles to examine the cosmology found within them.

Theurgy’s soteriological ends

The primary goal of theurgy was the salvation of the soul and its unification with the Supreme Divine. It was this aspect of the individual which was the object of a theurgist’s interest: Iamblichus claims that theurgy has a specific soteriological end, the purification and salvation of the soul.²⁷ Difficulty arises because each philosopher had a different conception of the soul, the appropriate means of purification, and the mechanism for the soul’s ascent. The focus here is not the different opinions held by individuals, but that Neoplatonic philosophers claimed to have answers to what happens to the soul after death.²⁸

Indeed, one of the main themes of the Chaldean Oracles and theurgy is soteriology. For example, one of the Oracles explains:

Seek out the channel of the soul, from where it [descended] in a certain order to serve the body; [and] seek [how] you will raise it up again to its order by combining (ritual) action with sacred word.²⁹

Another fragment explains further:

How does the order of angels cause the soul to ascend?

‘By making the soul bright with fire...’ (the oracle says) That is, illuminating the soul on all sides and filling it with pure fire, which gives it an unswerving order and power through which it does not rush into material disorder but makes contact with the light of the divine beings.³⁰

Light and divine fire are key concepts within Chaldean theology. In fact, another name for theurgy is *φωταγωγία* which means “evocation of light” or similarly, *θεαγωγία*, “evocation of god.” Luck has pointed out that these terms are synonymous because god is thought of as light.³¹ Fire and light feature widely in the Oracles and can be considered one manifestation of God. The Chaldean Oracles confirm that the desire and purpose of the individual soul in theurgy was to reunite itself with the divine. A theurgist would strive to understand a sufficient amount about the various manifestations of gods, and the ways in which they were symbolized in the physical world in order “to open himself up to the ubiquitous presence of the divine in all things.”³² The accomplished theurgist would use a ritual form of magic to unite himself with the gods. This concept, the salvation of the soul, became a new paradigm which challenged Delphic authority. Delphi did not concern itself with salvation or the afterlife but, rather, with how to interact with the gods within a civic context in *this* life. Therefore theurgy, and other religions which stressed soteriological ends, offered their proficiency in matters completely outside Delphic expertise. Increasingly, people were becoming concerned with salvation and the afterlife and so they sought other avenues to satisfy these spiritual needs. Indeed, Luck pointed out several synonyms used in theurgy such as *ὄργια*, *μυστήρια*, *τελεταί*, and *μυσταγωγία* which indicate “that, in later paganism, theurgy had acquired the status of the old Mystery religions; in fact, theurgy can be considered the ultimate development of the mysteries, because it represents an initiation into the highest mystery of all, the union of man and god.”³³ Although Delphi had not been traditionally associated with these issues (a role filled by Eleusis) other oracular centers, as we saw in Chapters 4 and 5, were embracing these notions and thriving during Delphi’s decline.

The goal of the theurgist seems clear and universal – the ascent of the soul to gain unification with the divine – but the manner in which this was achieved is uncertain. First, each Neoplatonist had his own version of theurgy; different aspects of the art are praised more highly by particular philosophers. This variety, in the beliefs and practices surrounding theurgy, was noted by Damascius in his commentary on Plato’s *Phaedo*. He writes: “some, such as Plotinus, Porphyry, and many others honor philosophy more highly, while Iamblichus, Syrianus, Proclus, and the theurgists give more honor to the hieratic art.”³⁴ This demonstrates that even in antiquity there was a distinction, not necessarily within theurgy itself, but rather in relation to the importance placed on various aspects of the art by certain philosophers.³⁵ Perhaps different philosophers

utilized the theurgic art to achieve their own ends or, perhaps, there were developments in thought regarding the practice. It is more useful, for our purposes, to understand each philosopher's view of theurgy, rather than to attempt to categorize it.

Iamblichus distinguishes theology from theurgy by stating that the former is simply talking about the divine whereas the latter leads to actual participation.³⁶ Furthermore, this participation leads to a union with the gods at the highest theurgical levels. He refers to this as theurgic union (θεουργικὴν ἕνωσιν).³⁷ Porphyry, however, argues that philosophy and philosophical contemplation are a sure way to unite oneself with the divine.³⁸ Iamblichus counters this claim by stating that, "a conception of the mind does not conjoin theurgists with the gods; since if this were the case, what would hinder those who philosophize theoretically from having a theurgic union with the gods?"³⁹ Crucial aspects of the process, then, concern philosophical contemplation and aspects of a "hieratic art." Several examples from the Chaldean Oracles demonstrate this point.

From the surviving evidence, Des Places (one of the first editors of the Oracles) has tentatively proposed some of the elements required for the preparation of the soul for unification with the divine, based on several of the Chaldean Oracles.⁴⁰ It seems that the use of stones was essential, as one oracle reminds us: "When you perceive an earthly demon approaching, offer the *mnizouris* stone (λίθον μνίζουριον) while making an invocation."⁴¹ This characterizes an aspect of the "hieratic art" in which, it seems, one would have had to be instructed on the use of material objects by a fellow theurgist. Other "magical" practices and instruments were used in theurgy and, indeed, while borrowed from traditional magic, they were used in order to gain salvation of the soul. The animation of statues with herbs, animals, and spells, the use of magical wheels, and practices of binding were rites used by the theurgist.⁴² The use of sacred objects and overt ritual practices suggest a need for a demonstration of power. In this way, the expertise of the theurgist could be reinforced.

One Oracle demonstrates the significance of thought, and thus supports Porphyry's emphasis: "Therefore, even the oracle has advised that '... the fire-heated thought ...' holds the very first order in sacred worship."⁴³ Intense, personal contemplation was another avenue for theurgic rites. This meditative process stressed aspects of virtue to purify the soul and prepare it for connection with the divine. The evidence of these Oracles suggests that combinations of sacred objects, as well as particular philosophical thought, were both essential to the practice of theurgy. To follow Athanassiadi's definition, theurgy could be thought of as "the often involuntary manifestation of an inner state of sanctity deriving from a combination of goodness and knowledge in which the former element prevails."⁴⁴ Goodness, here, means philosophical purity attained through contemplation while knowledge refers to an understanding of the theurgic process and ritual.

For Delphi, it was the personal relationship with the divine offered by theurgy that roused competition. If an individual could, in a sense, connect

with god (or even, as we shall see, *become* divine) the need for a medium would be removed, and the Pythia's powers would become increasingly marginal. This type of individual divination, and the personal certainty it offered, was distinct from oracular divination and was becoming more popular, at the expense of Delphi. This is demonstrated by Porphyry's collection of oracles, *De Philosophia ex Oraculis Haurienda*. Much of the collection is lost but the Prologue survives. Porphyry tells us that the oracles focused more on philosophy than cult ritual and, even more importantly, that "the utility which this collection possesses will be best known to as many as have ever been in travail with the truth, and prayed that by receiving the manifestation of it from the gods they might gain relief from their perplexity by virtue of the trustworthy teaching of the speakers."⁴⁵ For Porphyry, oracular wisdom was not the supreme form of access to the divine but, rather, a form of philosophical contemplation – oracles could only confirm beliefs, understanding and knowledge of the divine but they did not provide these things. Delphi was no longer the supreme source of divine wisdom. Rather, by this time, Delphi's prestige was maintained because of respect for history, culture, and tradition. It was no longer perceived as *the* divinatory authority.

The goal of theurgy also offered competition to Delphi. In an age when the afterlife and the concept of salvation were becoming widespread and popular, theurgy provided help and hope. By supplying techniques, methods, teachers and even a sort of dogma in the form of the Oracles, theurgy allowed individuals their own access to answers. Delphi, on the other hand, had demonstrated little expertise, or even knowledge, in these matters and so was not consulted for assistance in the new concerns of the day. People at various levels of society wanted assistance regarding the afterlife and the fate of the soul – and theurgy aimed to provide it.

Finally, many of the concepts developed by Platonists offered competition to Delphi. Beginning with Plato, there was a gradual intellectual evolution within philosophical circles which, by the second and third centuries AD, had become ubiquitous amongst the intelligentsia. A new cosmology was being conceptualized, one in which the Olympian gods played a much smaller role, and a new hierarchy of divine beings was accepted.⁴⁶ The new cosmology, according to the Neoplatonists, has deep philosophical roots but is in many ways novel and unique. By the time the Platonic foundations had culminated in the Chaldean Oracles, these concepts had influenced society at large. The spreading of a belief in a personal connection with the divine diminished the need for a medium such as the Pythia to obtain knowledge of the gods. The inscriptional record, which bears witness to a variety of these philosophical concepts, many seen in the oracles from Claros, demonstrates that these sentiments were incorporated into a cultic context, thereby spreading the ideas to a larger portion of the population. The most notable example in this regard is the inscription from Oenoanda, erected at a cult site, which propagates henotheistic theology.⁴⁷ The ideas of the Neoplatonists offered direct competition to Delphi.

The Neoplatonists

The Neoplatonic school of thought traces its beginnings back to Plotinus, who was born in Egypt in AD 205. He moved from the eastern Mediterranean to Rome, in approximately AD 245. There he taught the philosophies of Plato as well as those of his own mentor, Ammonius, whom he had met in Alexandria and under whom he had studied for nearly a decade.⁴⁸ After teaching in Rome, Plotinus began to write down his own philosophical ideas in a series of treatises which were responses to questions raised in his lectures. These were compiled by his pupil Porphyry, who arranged the dialectical treatise into six groups of nine essays, hence the title *Enneads*. Within the work, Plotinus illustrates many of the fundamental Neoplatonic elements such as astronomy, magical ritual, and ethical considerations. Book II, *On the Universe*, highlights the hierarchy of Plotinus' cosmology.

According to Plotinus, the nature of the universe, as conceived in terms of celestial movement, demiurge, and the generation of the cosmos, has its foundations in Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics.⁴⁹ It consists of three underlying realities, or hypostases – the One (τὸ ἓν), Intellect (νοῦς), and Soul (ψυχή) – each existing within individuals as well as in nature.⁵⁰ Each of these stems from a First Principle, something simple from which they all emerge, which is reminiscent of Plato. This First Principle or the “Source of Sources” (πηγὴν πηγῶν) could be seen to be God in Plotinus' cosmology, but he does not explicitly say so. An immortal heaven, a piece of which is contained within every individual soul, also exists.⁵¹ He posits several characteristics of the soul: its nature has tendency towards heaven; it is devoid of mass, and indivisible as it is incorporated of, and within, the One.⁵² Further, each individual soul is divided into a higher and lower aspect, one rational and the other irrational. Plotinus maintained that the higher part of the individual soul remained “unfallen” and, therefore, already in a state of ascension. This meant that an individual need only recognize that he was *already* in union with the divine through philosophical contemplation. The only remaining goal was to align his own moral efforts with that of his higher soul and the divine.

Plotinus mentions “the gods” throughout the *Enneads*. However, as Dillon observes, “the words are generally little more than a fossil survival, an accident of language not a reality of thought.”⁵³ In this way, the gods assume a more peripheral role, and philosophical doctrines take a central focus. A conception of the divine, that does not include the personalities of the traditional Olympian gods but rather the powers of the individual in divine terms, spread throughout intellectual circles.

In the *Enneads*, Plotinus claims that:

There is, thus, no longer any absurdity or impossibility in the notion that the soul in the earth has vision: we must, further, consider that it is the soul of no mean body; that in fact it is a god since certainly soul must be everywhere good.⁵⁴

This passage is clear – the soul of an individual is divine, thus the capacity for divine knowledge is already inherent in everyone. It is only a matter, therefore, of revealing this notion to oneself. This theory leaves little room for the authority of Delphi to interact with the gods: individuals already have this capacity. Indeed, Plotinus argues explicitly that:

Many souls which were formerly in human beings did not cease to benefit mankind when they were out of the body: they have established oracular shrines and give help by their prophecies in other ways and demonstrate through themselves that the other souls have also not perished.⁵⁵

Oracular divination, then, becomes the workings of human souls, rather than the gods. This notion was also hinted at by Plutarch.⁵⁶

Much of our understanding of Plotinus is due to his pupil, Porphyry, who wrote a meticulous account of Plotinus' life, the *Vita Plotini*. Porphyry was also a distinguished philosopher and continued in the Neoplatonic tradition of his teacher. We are acquainted with Porphyry's theurgy in his *Epistle ad Anebo*, addressed to the Egyptian priest, Anebo. It survives in the treatise *De Mysteriis Aegyptiorum* by Iamblichus, Porphyry's contemporary, who responds to the letter, in which he develops his own systematic work regarding divination, magic, theurgy, and other occult matters. Porphyry and Iamblichus have contrasting ideas on theurgy, the role of the gods concerning the salvation of the soul, and the proper method of ascension.⁵⁷ The Delphic oracle, cited at the outset of this chapter, honors these two philosophers and in a sense, sanctions their authority.

One of the most intriguing aspects of Porphyry's inquiry, in his *Epistle ad Anebo*, is his three-fold explanation of prophecy. First, he suggests that prophecy is caused by the gods, who have been drawn down to earth by compulsion.⁵⁸ Under this model, it can be suggested that trips to Delphi to consult Apollo would no longer be necessary. One could simply evoke magical spells to *compel the god* to oneself. Second, Porphyry suggests that prophecies come from our own souls, and third, that these prophecies are possible with the assistance of divine intervention.

Iamblichus counters each of these proposals in his work. In fact, he presents Porphyry's sentiments so as to refute them. Iamblichus maintains the Platonic idea that gods are immovable and immutable. He suggests that the gods appear in the form of light, visible to the theurgic practitioner, and should not be thought of in a physical sense. He says:

Sometimes, however, they (the light bringing, φωτὸς ἀγωγὴν) also make use of established conditions such as are familiar to the gods that are about to be brought down, or chants or dramatic compositions, these having been suitably prepared for the order of reception, the coming and appearing of the gods.⁵⁹

So, for Iamblichus, the gods are not willed down physically but, rather, their essence becomes visible to the theurgist. This, in turn, brings them closer to unification with the theurgist.

Porphyry's explanation of compulsion seems to have convinced society, beyond the philosophical elite. This is suggested by the popularity of magical spells which promised to compel the gods. Porphyry's first explanation – that men have the power to draw the gods to the earth to serve them – is also a common conception in traditional magical ritual. Indeed, Majercik argues that “it is more than likely that Chaldean theurgic practice was close, in many respects, to those traditions preserved in the magical papyri.”⁶⁰ Examples are found in the *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (PGM), a body of papyri from Greco-Roman Egypt, which contains a variety of magical spells, incantations, and rituals. Most of the texts survive from the period spanning the second century BC to the fifth century AD, a time which largely coincides with decreased consultation at Delphi.⁶¹

Although these particular examples are magical, not theurgical, the two practices do have some parallels. These instances may demonstrate the concept of compulsion and how it was performed. Most importantly, the notion of compulsion, seen in the intellectually elite endeavor of theurgy and the more ubiquitous practice of magic, demonstrates a shift in religious experience during the period under consideration. Religious experience was becoming more personalized and as such, less reliant on a particular place of worship. Smith has categorized the spheres of religious worship as “here” meaning “domestic religion located primarily in the home and in burial sites” and “there” referring to “public, civic and state religion based on temple constructions;” and the final division is “anywhere” which refers to “a rich diversity of religious formations that occupy an interstitial space between these two loci, including a variety of religious entrepreneurs, and ranges from groups we term ‘associates’ to activities we label ‘magic.’”⁶² The shift towards an interstitial space becomes increasingly clear in Late Antiquity, as can be seen from the following examples from the PGM.

In PGM III 282–409, “Apollo is made ‘pliable’ through certain songs and rituals: for a direct vision, set up a tripod and a table of olive wood or of laurel wood...cover the tripod with clean linen.... place on the table a [hollow figurine] of Apollo out of laurel wood...”⁶³ This spell is particularly interesting because it professes to evoke the prophetic knowledge of Apollo, thereby, allowing personal access to the god. The ritual requires the construction of a “personal Delphi,” complete with tripod, laurel, and Apollo.⁶⁴ This setting would allow Apollo to be compelled down to the magician so that he could answer the consultant's questions without the assistance of a temple, priest, or sanctuary, creating an “anywhere” type of religious experience.

There are several other examples of compulsion of the gods in magical ritual, and these give some context for Porphyry's explanation.⁶⁵ It appears that there was a widely-held belief that the gods could be called down, from Olympus or Delphi, to an individual. This is significant because it suggests that the

practitioner, in a sense, became the Pythia – an inspired prophet who could evoke Apollo to answer whatever questions the consultant wished. The ability to assume the role of the Pythia personally would, therefore, make the trip to Delphi superfluous, as the oracle could be obtained in one's own home. The evidence, provided by the response cited at the beginning of this chapter – “The Syrian is divinely inspired; the Phoenician is knowledgeable” – suggests that this was particularly true when the authority of the theurgist was sanctioned by the oracle. It is also worth noting that a trip to Delphi could be problematic – there was no guarantee that the god would be present during a visit. Additionally, it may have been a difficult and dangerous journey at this time.⁶⁶

The second and third explanations of prophecy given by Porphyry suggest that individuals could have the capacity to prophesy, either with or without the help of the gods. By assuming the power of an established shrine, the individual prophet undermines the authority of institutional divination. Other works of Porphyry associate philosophical contemplation with divination, as we shall see below. The opening passages of *Phaedrus* indicate that Plato is the basis for this assumption. Here, Socrates distinguishes between two types of madness – on the one hand, he views it as a human disease and, on the other, divine. Socrates continues, “we made four divisions of the divine madness, ascribing them to four gods, saying that prophecy was inspired by Apollo, the mystic madness by Dionysus, the poetic by the Muses, and the madness of love, inspired by Aphrodite and Eros.”⁶⁷ Later, this divination was equated with philosophical activity by Porphyry in *De Abstinencia ab Esu Animalium*. In fact, Porphyry explicitly tells us:

That the man who we designate as a philosopher, and who is separated from externals, will not be disturbed by *daemons*, nor be in want of diviners, nor in the viscera of animals. For he earnestly endeavors to be separated from these things for the sake of which divinations are effected. For he does not betake himself to nuptials, in order that he may molest the diviner about marriage, or merchandise, or inquiries about a servant, or an increase of property, or any other object of vulgar pursuit.⁶⁸

Thus, the pursuits of the Neoplatonic philosophers were viewed as a source of divination, and furthermore, they gave the opportunity for divine knowledge, as well as a connection to the gods. If one aligned himself to the ideals and practices of a Neoplatonist, he would have no need to consult an oracle about personal matters, such as “mules, marriages and money,” as had become the case at Delphi.⁶⁹

This idea is explicit in the oracle, found in Porphyry's *Vita Plotini*.⁷⁰ The length of the oracle precludes a comprehensive examination, however, several lines, which highlight the references to Plato's *Phaedrus*, are worth some comment. Apollo says:

...come sacred chorus of Muses, let us unite in inspiration to reach the limits of all song...*Daemon*, once a man, but now attaining the more divine lot of *daemones*, since you have loosened the bond of human

necessity, and in the vigor of your spirit have swum from the roaring billows of the bodily frame towards the shore of a peaceful headland, in your haste to set going to the well-turned course of a pure soul far away from the mob of sinners. There the light of god shines forth, there are the righteous in purity, far from unrighteous sin.⁷¹

Several Neoplatonic ideas are present within this oracle. Those associated with the inspiration of the Muses and divine prophecies of Apollo are reminiscent of Plato. Here, Neoplatonism, by way of the oracle, testifies to the identification of philosophy with the higher truths traditionally found in divination, that Plato's Socrates was careful to distinguish. Similarly, the other approach of Porphyry, in which philosophy is tied to divination, is also important to our purposes. Porphyry tended to identify philosophical endeavors with ultimate truths, much like those truths offered by oracular shrines. This idea enforced their worth as well as their position of authority in the wake of oracular silence.

A final piece of evidence supporting this idea, that philosophers were viewed as possessing divine wisdom, comes from the novel of Heliodorus, *Aethiopica*, which cannot be dated with much assurance, but the dramatic date of the novel is during the Classical period.⁷² Still, the sentiments found within the book can be attributed to the perception of Delphi in the final centuries of its operation. The characters visit Delphi to obtain an oracle, "I (Calasiris) learned that there was a city in Greece named Delphi, sacred to Apollo and containing shrines of other gods, and that it was a center for the work of learned men in a situation apart from the maddening crowd."⁷³ He goes on to describe the conversations he had with the many philosophers who gathered around the temple. Delphi maintained its role as a center for wisdom as it had through the ages, but the philosophers were the ones who held the new knowledge, the divine wisdom that came from Neoplatonism. In this sense, people could turn to the philosophers who were sanctioned by Delphi for answers. The oracle, as we see from the extant responses which depend on and reinforce traditional religion, was not consulted to illuminate matters of theology, the afterlife, and salvation. Rather, the philosophers took its place, quite literally. It must be admitted, though, that the oracle was consulted in the novel, but again not as the supreme source of divine knowledge; its role was due to its historical and traditional place in society.

For Porphyry, access to the divine was, above all, through philosophical contemplation. This, however, is more akin to *theology* than *theurgy*. Indeed, Porphyry was more interested in contemplation than theurgy and Augustine describes Porphyry's views on the practice:

Porphyry goes so far as to promise some sort of purification of the soul by means of theurgy, though to be sure he is reluctant to commit himself, and seems to blush with embarrassment in his argument. On the other hand, he denies that this art offers to anyone a way of return to God; and so one can observe him maintaining two contradictory positions...⁷⁴

According to Augustine, Porphyry was not entirely convinced of the efficacy of theurgy and it is probably this uncertainty that led him to ask these questions of Anebo so as to better understand some of the concepts. However, modern scholars have suggested that Porphyry believed that theurgy was useful in purifying the “lower” soul, which is the part of our soul which does not cease to exist upon death, but rather exists in a generic form while the self returns to the intelligible realm of the divine. For Porphyry (and Plotinus), there is a dual nature of man; a higher and lower soul, as well as an inner and outer man.⁷⁵

In either case, Iamblichus may better exemplify the practice of theurgy. His response to Porphyry’s letter takes the form of a treatise on divination, which has been shown to explicate Iamblichus’ version of theurgy particularly, for our purpose, regarding the divinatory practices at Claros, Didyma, and Delphi. One of the issues concerning divination that Porphyry raises concerns the matter of procedure at oracular sanctuaries. He notes:

There are some who drink water, as the priest of the Clarian Apollo in Colophon; but others are seated at the mouth [of a cavern], as those who prophesy at Delphi; and others are empowered by vapors from the water, like the prophetess at Branchidae.⁷⁶

Iamblichus confirms Porphyry’s observation and gives more detail of each oracular procedure. The emphasis, for him, is on the “divine luminance” or a “light-like spirit” who flashes from above like lightning. The gods seem to manifest themselves in the form of light, rather than in their typical Olympian personifications. According to this model, the various methods and apparatus used by the prophets and prophetesses are not crucial for facilitating divination but are, rather, sanctioned by tradition.⁷⁷

The traditional conception of oracular divination – either by water, tripod, chasm, or vapor – goes unheeded by Iamblichus and the entire industry of oracular sanctuaries becomes, in his view, superfluous. Places such as Delphi, Claros, and Didyma may have had historic value for the philosopher, but as far as a connection with divinities or a spiritual connection was concerned, they held little value.⁷⁸ Rather, he maintains that since divinities exist everywhere, and cannot be detained in one place (as the magicians claim), the truth of all things has a transcendent essence. He explains:

...if, indeed, we have stated these things rightly, the divining power of the gods is not encompassed in parts by anything – neither by place, nor by a divisible human body, nor by a soul that is held fast in a single form of divisible qualities...⁷⁹

Iamblichus’ *De Mysteriis*, as Athanassiadi has noted, “contains an apology for traditional cult while playing down the importance of sacred places as compared with the authority of holy men, the theurgists...”⁸⁰ For Iamblichus,

Delphi was no longer needed to access the divine; it survived only as an homage to tradition, history, and culture.

Iamblichus does seem to justify the traditional oracular divinatory practices, but in a new, Neoplatonic way. He claims that the ability of the Pythia (and the priestess at Branchidae) to prophesy is due to her capacity to be filled with divine light or radiance.⁸¹ In this way, he seems to support the oracular institutions, but manipulates the traditional procedure. Originally it was Apollo who entered the Pythia, not the divine as manifested in light. Iamblichus may have supported the use of Delphi, but not in the traditional sense. I tend to think that he was simply paying homage to the cultural and historical role Delphi once assumed, rather than considering oracular consultation a worthy form of divine access.

In his conception of divination and connection to the divine, Iamblichus regarded people rather than places as holy.⁸² This emphasis on divinity within an individual was an important concept and it was one which appealed to a large portion of society. Although Iamblichus was a part of the higher, intellectual crowd, his ideals struck a more universal chord. Iamblichus had become a popular figure, in philosophical circles, but there is some evidence that his beliefs and practices were, to a certain extent, aimed toward and adopted by the common people. Shaw has commented on this. He notes that Iamblichus' apology for animal sacrifice, for chanting unintelligible vowels, and ritually arranging stones and herbs "implied theurgy was in some way a concession to the religious needs of the common man, a 'Platonism' tailored for a popular audience, of which Platonism proper had no need."⁸³ However, Iamblichus did not view theurgy as a process to be taken lightly by the common man. Rather he considered it to be the highest of intellectual pursuits. This would create some hesitation in the application of many of his ideas to the masses. However, his insistence on these seemingly mundane and simple rituals could reflect the ability of theurgy to reach a wide audience and pool of practitioners.

By the first three centuries AD, many Platonic ideas had infiltrated an audience which was broader than the intellectual elite.⁸⁴ As Dillon has noted, "the Platonic world-view penetrated very widely into the seething mass of sects and salvation-cults that sprang up within the Greco-Roman world in the first two centuries AD."⁸⁵ This point is most clearly demonstrated if we consider the Chaldean Oracles, which transform Platonic notions into religious cult. The extent to which these ideas extended into the world at large is, however, always difficult to determine. Despite this, the various oracular responses found in Asia Minor (addressed in Chapters 4 and 5), which uphold Neoplatonic and theurgic beliefs, give us some insight into the magnitude of the spread. In addition to the Chaldean Oracles, elements of Platonism are certainly present in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, some Gnostic sects, and certain aspects of Christianity. This demonstrates that Neoplatonic ideas were not exclusive to the intellectual elite, but spread into several religious cults throughout the Mediterranean.⁸⁶ If these notions were accepted by a broad base of adherents, then Delphic

authority would be questioned on various levels of society and would thereby damage the authority of the oracle.

It is worth noting the soteriological and personal aspects of certain sects of Christianity which had become popular during this time. Particularly relevant are the Gnostic sects, which have many affinities with theurgy and Neoplatonism and therefore offered an alternative to Delphic guidance. One prime example comes from *The Apocryphon of John*, a Gnostic text discovered at Nag Hammadi. This post-resurrection discussion between Jesus and his disciple, John, reveals many ideas akin to those in the Chaldean corpus. For example, when discussing the divine, the text says:

He is [immeasurable light] which is pure, holy, [(and) immaculate]. He is ineffable [being perfect in] incorruptibility. Not in perfection, nor in blessedness, nor in divinity, but he is far superior. He is not corporeal [nor] is he incorporeal. He is neither large [nor] is he small.⁸⁷

By describing the ultimate divinity by what it is *not*, the author of this text follows the trend of second and third century theological convention, as we have seen. Perhaps the ideas found within the Gnostic sects demonstrate a much wider range of attraction for many of these similar ideas. Certain concepts of the divine, and an individual's relationship with it, may not have been restricted to the intellectual elite. One idea in particular – salvation of individual souls – seems to be a common concern for people in the second and third centuries AD.

For the Christian Gnostics, like the theurgist, knowledge of one's own divinity is essential to the salvation of the soul and the reunification with the divine. In the *Apocryphon of John*, a complex cosmology is also described. A divine being (but not the ultimate divinity), Sophia, created her own offspring outside of the divine realm, called the Pleroma. This produced an evil offspring, Yaltabaoth, who created the material world and captured Sophia within the various material bodies. As such, the *gnosis* required for salvation is the divinity of all individuals trapped in the material realm. For some Gnostics, salvation required philosophical contemplation as well as secret knowledge of who they are and where they came from. This is not the type of *gnosis* one would find at Delphi.

By AD 360 Prohaeresius, a Christian rhetorician and teacher, had appealed to the knowledge of an expert theurgist in order to determine the length of Emperor Julian's reign.⁸⁸ This suggests that theurgic beliefs and practices belonged to the traditional intellectual elite, and also to Christians. Athanassiadi examines how stories such as these helped to convert Christians to traditional cults. She cites various reasons to explain why conversion to Neoplatonism was not uncommon. She observes that "it was an emotional haven for the weak, and on which combined the excitement of modernity with the authority of tradition as well as being socially exclusive, mentally demanding and spiritually satisfying."⁸⁹ Theurgy had become extremely popular with those who could

understand its beliefs and practices. This was largely thanks to Iamblichus and his work, particularly his commentary on the Chaldean Oracles, revelations to which we now return.

Chaldean cosmology

A complex theology is found in both theurgy and the Chaldean Oracles. Each postulates a hierarchy of divine beings with different functions. By the second and third centuries AD, philosophers and religious officials were struggling to understand and incorporate these entities into a religious framework. They had difficulty with the nature of the relationship between divine beings and man, the identity of the Supreme Being in relation to these other, lesser, beings, and the manner in which religious practices were to be performed within the context of these issues. The central problem involved the nature of God and this is evident in both Chaldean cosmology and oracular consultation in Asia Minor.

Evidence of this concern is apparent in many of the oracles given by Apollo in Asia Minor, as seen in Chapters 4 and 5. The oracular responses found in Lactantius, the Tübingen *Theosophy*, and in the inscription from Oenoanda are illustrative of attempts to discover answers to questions concerning the nature of Apollo, God, and the relationship between the two. Also, the henotheistic element is apparent in an oracle from Claros claiming Zeus, Hades, Helios, and Dionysus are the same god; according to this, Iao (the Judeo-Christian monotheistic God, rather than the Olympian pantheon, now reigned supreme.⁹⁰

The Chaldean Oracles and Neoplatonists provide some answers to questions concerning the ultimate divinity. As noted above, Plotinus perhaps regarded the Supreme Deity as the “First Principle” from which all else becomes. Iamblichus seemed to regard divinity, or at least the part of divinity which is intelligible to humanity, as light. Most Neoplatonists thought that aspects of this higher God existed within the souls of men. The Oracles contain an assortment of possibilities regarding the nature of the ultimate God. Several divine beings such as Chronos, Aion, and Eros held a high place within Chaldean theology, but were not considered to be the Supreme deity. In the extant oracles, the best candidate for this position seems to be *Nous*, or the Intellect of the Father. This is clear from the following example:

The Intellect of the Father (νοῦς πατρός), while thinking with its vigorous will, shot forth the multiformed Ideas. All these leapt forth from one Source, for from the Father comes both will and perfection. But the Ideas were divided by the Intelligible Fire and allotted to other intelligibles. For the Ruler placed before the multiformed cosmos and intelligible and imperishable model from which, along a disorderly track, the world with its form hastened to appear, engraved with multiform Ideas. There is one Source for these, from which other terrible (Ideas), divided, shoot forth, breaking themselves on the bodies of the worlds. Those which are borne

around the frightful wombs like a swarm of bees – flashing here and there in various directions – are the intelligible Thoughts from the Paternal Source, which pluck in abundance the flower of fire from the acme of sleepless Time. The first self-perfected Source of the Father spouted forth these primordial Ideas.⁹¹

According to this oracle, all Ideas come from the single source, the Paternal Intellect. This suggests that *Nous* could be seen as the Supreme God within Chaldean theology.⁹² However, Majercik postulates the question: “is the Father to be equated strictly with his Intellect or is the so-called Paternal Intellect to be regarded as the first emanation of the Father?”⁹³ The Oracular corpus offers us no concrete conclusion regarding the Supreme God. The idea gathered from the corpus is that there is an ultimate being which is, in a sense, higher than all the rest – there is simply no single word for it.⁹⁴ This concept is reminiscent of the notion of the ineffable nature of God, which we see in the oracle from Claros, and it typifies the henotheistic religious climate of the time.

This sort of understanding of the divine – ineffable and manifest in thought, soul, light, and intellect – can be seen to characterize the psychological and religious sentiments of the philosophical elite in the second and third centuries AD. People sought answers to questions on these matters from the oracles of Asia Minor and from practicing theurgists. There is scant evidence that Delphi played a significant role in developing or propagating these ideas; the only allusion to these matters is found in the response in which Porphyry and Iamblichus are praised.⁹⁵ Delphi appears to have sanctioned these ideas, albeit rarely, during the twilight of its operation – it no longer influenced the religious framework of the Mediterranean, as it had in the Archaic and Classical eras. The Pythian Apollo had always maintained that Zeus was the head of the divine pantheon and Apollo was his voice. Delphi did not engage in this philosophical trend through its oracles, Apollo’s prophecies no longer stemmed from the highest God. Now, new philosophies and oracles prophesied that Zeus and Helios (who was associated, by then, with Apollo), Hades, and Dionysus were one. The Chaldean Oracles did not even regard *that* god as the highest divine manifestation.

The Supreme Deity, the *Nous*, or Father, or One, was now thought to interact with humanity through a proxy of lesser beings. The next in the hierarchy seems to be another, second Intellect. The first Intellect is called “once transcendent” (ἅπαξ ἐπέχειναι) and the next, “twice transcendent” (δίδυμ ἐπέχειναι).⁹⁶ This distinguishes aspects of the highest God, one in which the being is completely separated from the corporeal realm and the second which internalizes the Forms and projects them into the cosmos. The Supreme God, then, is further removed and thus less well known because there is less direct evidence for its existence. The Platonic forms emanate from the Paternal Intellect, but become distributed by the second Intellect, and reach the material world via the World-Soul.⁹⁷ The main function of the World-Soul is to connect individual souls

with the unified cosmic Soul, which was created by the Supreme One. As mentioned above, Plato insisted on this idea:

...reason cannot possibly belong to any apart from Soul. So because of this reflection He constructed reason within soul and soul within body as He fashioned the All, that so the work He was executing might be of its nature most fair and most good. Thus, then, in accordance with the likely account, we must declare that this Cosmos has verily come into existence as a Living Creature endowed with soul and reason owing to the providence of God.⁹⁸

The World-Soul, thus, facilitates unification with the divine. Indeed, Chaldean cosmology, as complicated as it may seem, is actually a well-organized system. Each intermediary being assists the individual, at different levels, with the ascension of the soul.

There are many other intermediary beings found in the Oracles. The ones most commonly referred to, and which feature largely in the fragments, are the Iynges (ἰνγκες), Connectors (συνοχεῖς), Teletarchs (τελετάρχαι), angels, and demons. Based on the fragments, it seems that the Iynges were thought to occupy the highest point of the hierarchy, followed by the Connectors and finally the Teletarchs.⁹⁹ The Iynges were associated with magic, originally describing the bird, wryneck. Ancient magicians would bind the bird to a wheel which they spun to recover a lost or unfaithful lover; the bird and wheel would draw hearts back and chain them into obedience.¹⁰⁰ However, in the Oracles, the Iynges became identified with Thoughts and Ideas. For example, “The Intelligible Iynges themselves understand from the Father; by Ineffable counsels being moved so as to understand.”¹⁰¹ So these Iynges act as a proxy between God and men as messengers but they are also, in a way, messengers themselves – the personification of Ideas and Intelligence. The Connectors are like the Iynges in the sense that they are issued from the One, but take on an additional role as protector. As Damascius describes them: “Most of all, (the function of guarding) has been assigned to the Connectors, inasmuch as they encompass and connect all things within themselves. The gods also speak in this way: ‘He has given the summits the protection of his (intellectual) Lightning-bolts, having mixed his own forces of strength among the connectors’,”¹⁰² Finally, the Teletarchs are divine entities which preside over all perfections as well as the Mysteries. Their name means “masters of initiation” and their function appears to be to rule over the three distinct worlds that exist in Chaldean cosmology which envisions a triad of concentric circles. These circles encompass both the intelligible and sensible orders including Empyrean World which is that of the intelligible, the Ethereal, the fixed stars and planets, and the Material realm including Earth. The three rulers of Chaldean initiation are Aion, Sun, and Moon, and they were essential to theurgic “elevation.” Personal contact with the divine was made possible by magical invocation of these three “rulers of initiation,” and therefore they

function as guides and intermediaries for the theurgist attempting to gain union with Supreme Deity.¹⁰³

These intermediary beings evoke some aspects of Delphi, particularly in that they provided a liminal point between humanity and the divine. The Pythia acted as a mediator between Apollo and the consultant. Then, by the second century AD, Plutarch postulated an additional mediator, *daemones*, which allowed the gods' will to be heard.¹⁰⁴ Plutarch's attempt to rationalize the decline of Delphi led him, eventually, to incorporate these same notions of a more intricate divine hierarchy. Clearly, during the second and third centuries AD, complex cosmologies were a common feature of religious sentiment. Plutarch attempted to adjust Delphic cosmology to fit with the trend. The intermediary hierarchy, of both types of divinatory theology, is essential.

Personalized religion

The most significant reason theurgy was developed, and persisted during the second and third centuries AD was that it made a *personal* contact with God possible. This feature provided an alternative to oracular consultation at Delphi. With the supremacy of Rome, civic authority was taken from the Greek *polis* and autonomy became a mirage. Likewise, citizenship, which once was dictated by the land, was now subject to the decision-making at Rome. The notion of a citizen and his ties to traditional *poleis* began to break down and now, just as Rome transcended local authority, personal connection to the divine transcends civic religion. Not only did theurgy offer a direct connection with God but, the conception of God was far more universal, and it fitted more neatly within the religious understanding of the day, and thus surpassed civic religion in the religious hierarchy. The new practice of divination became more popular at the expense of Delphi. The difference between the theurgical Oracles and those from the major centers revolves around the concept that the God could enter the medium's body, deliberately and at the behest of an appeal from the operator, rather than by proxy of a single medium, such as the Pythia (which was known as *enthousiasmos*). In theory, then, through the process of theurgy everyone could be possessed by the power of the divine.¹⁰⁵ This idea was particularly appealing to the intellectual population at large. No longer was a tiresome, expensive trip to Delphi needed, because a personal possession could be obtained at home. There was no need for an external mediator, such as the Pythia, only intermediary helpers who could assist individuals in theurgic elevation in their own time and place. Tied to this notion was that of the individual salvation of the soul, something which had never been a concern of Delphi, but had become a major concern for much of the Mediterranean. Delphi could not offer assistance or claim authority in these matters.

Divine salvation was an idea which became popular in many philosophical and religious circles during this time and it is particularly apparent in the many Mystery cults, including those of Cybele and Attis, the Orphic Movement, and Christianity.¹⁰⁶ These new concerns regarding the afterlife, and methods which

could provide personal access to the divine, are typical of Chaldean Oracles and theurgy in general. Delphi did not assist in these matters which were of increasing importance. Thus, the necessity for Delphi to inform on religious matters decreased. It was the elevation of the soul which was one of the greatest draws of theurgy and the Oracles with which it was associated.

It remains to note why the oracles of Asia Minor associated themselves with these issues and concerns. Athanassiadi has suggested that the oracles which expounded these theurgic concepts were “designed to prepare public opinion.”¹⁰⁷ Perhaps the “theological oracles” highlighted in Chapters 4 and 5, were given in order to spread the belief of theurgy and Neoplatonism. Or, as I suggest, theurgy had become so popular that the oracles had no choice but to submit to their theology, cosmology, and beliefs. There are several responses which seem to support a Neoplatonic view of the cosmos, which, in turn, suggests some support for these beliefs from Apollo. The oracles of Asia Minor, in particular, were influenced by many of these ideas: transmigration of the soul, a henotheistic theology, and a hierarchy which was different from the traditional Greek conception. As I demonstrated in the previous chapters, Delphi did not embrace these issues and was increasingly abandoned. If Delphi had supported or responded to the issues earlier, the sanctuary may have enjoyed continued patronage from consultants seeking philosophical insights.

Dodds describes Proclus’ definition of theurgy as “a power higher than all human wisdom, embracing the blessings of divination, the purifying powers of initiation, and in a word all the operations of divine possession.”¹⁰⁸ In this way, theurgy offered competition to Delphic consultation because it incorporated its wisdom, while adding supplementary esoteric knowledge such as one would gain from initiation into Mysteries. Theurgy, then, was more powerful than oracular consultation. Given this, the cosmological incorporation of the One and other Platonic ideas gains more weight because the source of this knowledge came from the divine, through the blessings of divination, and it was supplemented by other forms of divine contact.

The role of the theurgist was to understand these various manifestations of the divine. Oracles attempted to advise on these matters in Asia Minor, but there is little evidence that Delphi did so. Thus, “...the New Oracle (the holy man, theurgist and pagan saint), took over the functions of its classical predecessor (oracles) in their entirety: high politics, affairs of the heart and the body, spiritual matters and the regularization of ritual came together as the prerogative of the holy man.”¹⁰⁹ In the second and third centuries AD, people could gain access to this information in places other than Delphi, and did so.

Neoplatonism and the practices of theurgy – along with other philosophical schools and obscure religious wisdom – attracted adherents for another significant reason. These philosophies offered insight on how to live one’s life. They provided a way to integrate moral values, everyday life, and beliefs about the afterlife, as one coherent system. This is something that traditional cult and religious practices did not offer. There was no codification on how one could

align oneself with the greater cosmos. Neoplatonism and theurgy offered guidance on how to live life here in this world and also to prepare for the next.

The motivations for divination and contact with the divine were extended. People, particularly at the intellectual level of society, were concerned with salvation and a personal rapport with God. Theurgy offered techniques to deal with these concerns whereas Delphi could not offer salvation or personal contact with the divine. In certain ways, theurgy and the Neoplatonists, like magic and astrology, attempted to associate themselves with the traditional shrine to demonstrate authority and methods that were familiar to people in the second and third centuries AD. These practices did not deliberately assume many of Delphi's roles in order to offer competition. Society simply developed a number of new and sophisticated ways to deal with the same concerns as were once brought to the Pythian Apollo. The correlation of the rise of these ideas, rituals, and practices did not *cause* Delphi to decline, or ultimately close. Rather, they provided a new dimension of divine contact and an understanding of the universe, as well as man's place within the cosmos.

Notes

- 1 David, *In Porph. Isag. Prooem.* 4. See P&W 474; Fontenrose Q 261. K. Heineman trans.
- 2 Shaw (1995), p. 124. I distinguish between the Chaldean Oracles and oracles from Delphi and other oracular institutions by capitalization.
- 3 Tod (1957), pp. 108–114; see also Chapter 2 (pp. 81–82).
- 4 Athanassiadi (1992) and Brown (1971). Elsewhere, Athanassiadi (1993a) argues that theurgy helped to inspire a renewed interest in oracular divination, and may have influenced the religious atmosphere of the Mediterranean during Delphi's revival.
- 5 Matthews (1989), p. 115–116. He cites the analogy of other Greek words such as metal worker or stone worker (χαλκουργός, λιθουργός).
- 6 See Iamblichus, *Myst.* 3.26 and 3.29.
- 7 See Collins (2008), Luck (1985), Dickie (2001), and Graf (1997). For theurgy's magical associations, see Boyancé (1955).
- 8 Plato uses this term in *Rep.* 7.521c to describe the ascent of heroes from Hades to Olympus. It was later developed to mean the ascent of the soul and the unification with the Ultimate Divine. See Majercik (1989), p. 30.
- 9 Festugière (1971), pp. 585–596, Lewy (1978), and Dodds (1951).
- 10 Rosán (1949).
- 11 Iambl. *Myst.* 2.2.96–97.
- 12 Luck (1989), p. 189.
- 13 For example, Dillon (2007), p. 40.
- 14 Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 5.8.
- 15 Iambl. *Myst.* 3.18. See Addey (2012), pp. 142–143. This notion is also reminiscent of the need of the gods for men to give sacrifice in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Contrast that with the denial of prayer on behalf of Athena (Hom. *Il.* 6.297–319). Similar accounts of Apollo being drawn down from Olympus or Delphi are found in the *Greek Magical Papyri*, several instances are noted below.
- 16 Iambl. *Myst.* 9.1–3.
- 17 See Athanassiadi (1993a), pp. 121–122. For Marinus casting Proclus' horoscope, see *Vita Procli* 35.

- 18 The ancients uniformly separated divination into two types. Plato distinguishes between natural and technical divination several times in his works (see *Ap.* 22B–C; *Phdr.* 243C–D). Cicero also divides divination into two parts (*Div.* 1.34), “one which is allied with skill; the other, which is devoid of skill” (*unum, quod particeps esset artis, alterum, quod arte careret*), W.A. Falconer trans.
- 19 Addey (2014), p. 25.
- 20 Majercik (1989), p. 1. She stresses, however, that Chaldean Oracles and theurgic beliefs are closely related, but by no means identical. On the Julians, see Lewy (1978), p. 4 and Dodds (1947).
- 21 Athanassiadi (1999), p. 155, n. 30.
- 22 *Suda* 1.642.
- 23 This term was perhaps first used by Cumont (1956), p. 279. However, it must be noted that traditional cult did *not* have set doctrine.
- 24 Brown (1971), p. 100. He suggests that the holy man, then, has something to do with the silence of the oracles. He notes (p. 100 n. 243), “already in the third and early fourth century, a ‘prophet’ had taken on some of the more ‘personalized’ attributes of a holy man.” This would allow for a gradual transfer of authority.
- 25 For their origin and sources, see Athanassiadi (1999), pp. 149–183, Des Places (1971), and Lewy (1978).
- 26 Johnston (1990), p. 4.
- 27 Iambl. *Myst.* 1.12. Iamblichus’ view of the soul is dealt with at length in *De Anima*. One of the integral parts of Iamblichus’ theory is that the soul exists between the Intellect and the Body, and acts as a mediator between higher orders of souls, such as *daemones* and heroes, and the corporeal aspects (section 7). See Finamore (2002), pp. 14–15 and Taormina (2012), pp. 63–74.
- 28 For Porphyry’s conception of the soul see Smith (1974) and (1997). For Iamblichus’ conception, see Finamore (1985) and Taormina (2012). Finamore (1985), p. 11 explains that Iamblichus’ conception of the vehicle of the soul (ὄχημα-πνεῦμα) was a direct challenge to Porphyry’s. They disagreed on its composition, generation and ultimate fate.
- 29 Majercik (1989), p. 91; fr. 110, “Δίξο <καί> ψυχῆς ὀχετόν, ὅθεν ἔν τινι τάξει σώματι θετεύσας” <ὕπερθε καὶ πῶς> ἐπὶ τάξιν αὐθις ἀναστήσεις, ἱερῷ λόγῳ ἔργον ἐνώσας.” R.D. Majercik trans. For the ascent of the soul in other Oracles, see fr. 97, fr. 115, and fr. 121. Addey (2014) mentions too the possibility of fr. 111, fr. 116, fr. 122, and fr. 138.
- 30 Majercik (1989), p. 95; fr. 122 from Proclus, *Exc. chald.* 1.192, 13–17, “ἡ δὲ τῶν ἀγγέλων μερὶς πῶς ἀνάγει ψυχὴν; ‘τὴν ψυχὴν φέγγουσα πυρὶ,’ (φησί) τοῦτ’ ἐστὶ περιάμπουσα αὐτὴν πανταχόθεν, καὶ πλήρη ποιούσα τοῦ ἀχράντου πυρὸς ὃ ἐνδίδωσιν αὐτῇ τάξιν ἄκλιτον καὶ δύναμιν, δι’ ἣν οὐκ ἐκροίζειται εἰς τὴν ὑλικὴν ἀταξίαν ἀλλὰ συνάπτεται τῷ φωτὶ τῶν θεῶν.” The use of the term ἀγγέλων could also mean a divine messenger, not necessarily angels in the Christian sense, but surely the Oracles were influenced, to some extent, by Christianity. For the concept of *angeli*, see Cline (2011).
- 31 Luck (2000), p. 112. For Iamblichus’ view on light and the divine see Finamore (1993), pp. 55–64.
- 32 Tarrant (2007), p. 6.
- 33 Luck (2000), p. 116.
- 34 Damascius, *In Phaetonem* 172.1, “Ὅτι οἱ μὲν τὴν φιλοσοφίαν προτιμῶσιν, ὡς Πορφύριος καὶ Πλωτῖνος καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοὶ φιλόσοφοι· οἱ δὲ τὴν ἱερατικὴν, ὡς Ἰάμβλιχος καὶ Συριανὸς καὶ Πρόκλος καὶ οἱ ἱερατικοὶ πάντες.” As cited by Shaw (1985), p. 2, from Westerink (1977), p. 105.
- 35 Iambl. *Myst.* 5.15 claims that since there is a two-fold nature to the soul, one must have a dual nature of worship. Smith (2003) argues that differences in theurgical practice were based on the different types of men with different cultic needs,

much like the splintering of philosophical schools or Christian groups today. And so, perhaps, different philosophers utilized the theurgic art to achieve their own ends, or perhaps there was a development in thought regarding the practice. It is interesting to note that these differences did not necessarily lead to competing “schools of thought” as early philosophical views had done.

- 36 Iambl. *Myst.* 1.2.7.
- 37 Iambl. *Myst.* 2.11; see also *Myst* 4.2.184.
- 38 *Epist. ad Aneb.* 46–49. Much of Iamblichus’ treatise is a response to Porphyry; as shown by Finamore (1985).
- 39 Iambl. *Myst.* 2.11, “οὐδὲ γὰρ ἡ ἔννοια συνάπτει τοῖς θεοῖς τοὺς θεουργοὺς· ἐπεὶ τί ἐκόλυε τοὺς θεωρητικῶς φιλοσοφοῦντας ἔχειν τὴν θεουργικὴν ἔνωσην πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς;” A. Wilder trans.
- 40 Des Places (1971), p. 17, he uses mainly fragments 132, 139, and 208.
- 41 Majercik (1989), p. 105; fr.149, “Ἡνίκα δαίμονα δ’ ἐρχόμενον πρόσγειον ἀθρήσεις, θθε λίθον μνίζουριν ἐπαυδῶν...”
- 42 Majercik (1989), pp. 29–30. See also Psellus *PG* 122, 1132a8–12. On statues, see fr. 224, on the wheel, see fr. 223.
- 43 Majercik (1989), p. 103; fr. 139 from Proclus, *In Tim.* 1.211.11–13, “διὸ καὶ τὸ λόγιον ‘...τὴν πυριθάλπῃ ἔννοιαν...’ πρωτίστην ἔχειν τάξιν ἐν τῇ ἱερᾷ θρησκείᾳ παρεκελεύσατο.”
- 44 Athanassiadi (1993a), p. 116.
- 45 Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 4.8.2=303F, 25–34, “ἦν δ’ ἔχει ὠφέλειαν ἡ συναγωγὴ, μάλιστα εἰσονται ὅσοιπερ τὴν ἀλήθειαν ὠδίναντες ἠϋζαντό ποτε τῆς ἐκ θεῶν μάλιστα εἰσονται ὅσοιπερ τὴν ἀλήθειαν ὠδίναντες ἠϋζαντό ποτε τῆς ἐκ θεῶν ἐπιφανείας τυχόντες ἀνάπαυσιν λαβεῖν τῆς ἀπορίας διὰ τὴν τῶν λεγόντων ἀξιοπίστον διδασκαλίαν.” A. Smith trans.
- 46 Apollo declared that the Olympian deities were *angeloi* of the supreme deity, the All-Seeing Aether in his oracle from Oenoanda; see Chapter 5 (pp. 124–126). This is drastically different from Apollo’s declaration of the supremacy of the Olympian gods in the *Iliad* (5.476–478). Chaldean cosmology will be discussed below. For religious sentiments in Late Antiquity, see Athanassiadi and Frede (1999) and MacMullen (1981).
- 47 See Chapter 5.
- 48 For Plotinus and his teachings of Plato, see Gerson (1996); for his teachings of Ammonius, see Remes (2008). We gather from Porphyry’s *Vita Plotini* that Ammonius was not necessarily a member of the philosophical establishment. Rather, he was born a Christian and denounced his faith upon his introduction to philosophy. See Euseb. *Hist. ecl.* 6.19.7. He had a number of other famous pupils, such as Origen and Longinus, see Dillon (1996).
- 49 Plot. *Enn.* 2.1.30–45.
- 50 Plot. *Enn.* 5.1.10.
- 51 Plot. *Enn.* 2.4.6.
- 52 For the tendency toward heaven, see Plot. *Enn.* 2.3.20; for the other characteristics of the soul, see Plotinus, *Enn.* 4.1–2.
- 53 Dillon (1991), p. xxxv. He goes on to say “Where we meet ‘The Gods’ without any specification we are to understand, according to the context: sometimes the entire Divine Order; sometimes the Divine-Thoughts...sometimes the words indicate, vaguely, the souls of lofty men; sometimes there is some vague, sleepy acceptance of the popular notion of the Olympian personalities.”
- 54 Plot. *Enn.* 4.4.26, “Καὶ δὴ καὶ νοεῖν ψυχὴν οὐ φαύλου σώματος εἶναι, ὥστε καὶ θεὸν εἶναι· πάντως γὰρ καὶ ἀγαθὴν δεῖ αἰετὶ τὴν ψυχὴν εἶναι.” A.H. Armstrong trans.
- 55 Plot. *Enn.* 4.7.15, “Πολλοὶ δὲ ψυχὰι πρότερον ἐν ἀνθρώποις οὔσαι σωμάτων ἕξω γενόμεναι οὐκ ἀπέστησαν τοῦ εὐεργετεῖν ἀνθρώπους· αἱ δὲ καὶ μαντεῖα

- ἀποδειξάμεναι εἰς τε τὰ ἄλλα χρῶσαι ὠφελουσί καὶ δεικνύουσι δι' αὐτῶν καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων ψυχῶν, ὅτι μὴ εἰσὶν ἀπολωλυταί.”
- 56 See Chapter 2, (pp. 49–50).
- 57 On the relationship between Iamblichus and Porphyry, see Addey (2014).
- 58 Iamblichus (*Myst.* 3.18–21) records Porphyry’s view on this. These notions are outlined in Smith (1997), p. 32.
- 59 Iambl. *Myst.* 3.14, “Ἐνίστε δὲ καὶ καταστάσεις τινων χρῶνται, ὅσα οἰκεῖα τοῖς θεοῖς ὑπάρχει τοῖς μέλλουσιν ἐπιφέρεισθαι, ἢ καὶ ἐφοδαῖς ἢ συστάσεσι, καὶ αὐταῖς οἰκεῖαις παρεσκευασμέναις εἰς τε τὴν παρασκευὴν τῆς ὑποδοχῆς καὶ τὴν παρουσίαν τῶν θεῶν καὶ ἐπιφάνειαν.”
- 60 Majercik (1989), p. 24–25.
- 61 Betz (1986).
- 62 Smith (2003), p. 23.
- 63 *PGM* III 282–299. Φοῖβο<υ>, χα[λίφ]ρων ταῦτα[ις] ταῖς μολπαῖς καὶ ψαλμ[οῖς].] ... αὐτοπτον θεῖς τρίποδα καὶ τράπεζα[ν ἐ]λαῖνον ἢ ἐκ ξύλου δαφνῶν...καὶ σκεπάσα[ς] τὸν τρίποδα συνδόνι καθαρῷ ἐπίθεας... [θ]εῖναι τῇ τραπέζῃ [ὑπ]ό[κε]νον Ἀπόλλωνα ἐν ξύλῳ [δ]άφν[ης]...Betz (1986), pp. 26–27. W. C. Grese and M.W. Meyer trans.
- 64 The practice of creating a personal version of a private cult is a typical magical practice in late antiquity; see Smith (2005), pp. 13–28.
- 65 In the *PGM*, see III 187–262; *PGM* I. 262–347; *PGM* II. 130–140. See also Eitrem (1947), pp. 47–52 and Farone (2004), p. 217. These cases have a parallel in the literary evidence of Ammianus, who lived in the final days of Delphi and wrote a history which covered material from Nerva, until the death of Emperor Valens, (i.e. AD 96–378). He records a trial of AD 371–372, and specifically mentions the deeds of Patricius and Hilarius who were accused of determining who the next emperor would be by constructing a miniature Delphi and obtaining a prophecy from it through magical means. See Amm. *Marc.* 29.1.29–32.
- 66 See Constable (2003).
- 67 Pl. *Phdr.* 265b, “τῆς δὲ θείας τεττάρων θεῶν τέτταρα μέρη διελόμενοι, μαντικὴν μὲν ἐπίπνοιαν Ἀπόλλωνος θέντες, Διονύσου δὲ τελεστικήν, Μουσῶν δ’ αὖ ποιητικήν, τετάρτην δὲ Ἀφροδίτης καὶ Ἔρωτος...” H.N. Fowler trans.
- 68 Porphyry *Abst.* 2.52, “ὃν δ’ ἡμεῖς ὑπογράφομεν φιλόσοφον ἀφιστάμενον τῶν ἐκτός, εἰκότως φαμέν μὴ ἐνοχλήσειν δαίμοσι μηδὲ μάντεων δεήσεσθαι μηδὲ σπλάγχων ζῶων. ὧν γὰρ ἔνεκα αἱ μαντεῖαι, τούτων οὗτος μεμελέτηκεν ἀφίστασθαι. οὐ γὰρ εἰς γάμον καθήσιν, ἵνα περὶ γάμου τὸν μάντιν ἐνοχλήσῃ, οὐκ εἰς ἐμπορίαν, οὐ περὶ οἰκέτου, οὐ περὶ προκοπῆς καὶ τῆς ἄλλης παρ’ ἀνθρώποις δοξοκοπίας.” Adapted from T. Taylor trans. See also 2.53.
- 69 Arnush (2006), p. 98. This sentiment is found in Plutarch (*De Pyth.* or. 408b–c).
- 70 See Chapter 4, (pp. 107–108).
- 71 Porph. *Plot.* 22, “Ἄλλ’ ἄγε Μουσῶν ἱερὸς χορὸς, ἀπύσωμεν εἰς ἐν ἐπιπνεῖοντες αἰοιδῆς τέρματα πάσης...δαίμον, ἄνερ τὸ πάροιθεν, ἀτὰρ νῦν δαίμονος αἴσῃ θειοτέρῃ πελάων, ὅτ’ ἐλύσας δεσμὸν ἀνάγκης ἀνδρομέης, ρεθέων δὲ πολυφλοίσβοιο κυδοιμοῦ ῥωσάμενος πραπίδεσσιν ἐς ἥونا νηχύτου ἄκτῆς νήχε’ ἐπειγόμενος δῆμου ἅπο νόσφιν ἀλιτρῶν στηριζαὶ καθαρῆς ψυχῆς εὐκαμπέα οἶμην, ἧχι θεοῖο σέλας περιλάμπεται, ἧχι θέμιστες ἐν καθαρῷ ἀπάτερθεν ἀλιτροσύνης ἀθεμίστου.” A.H. Armstrong trans. The concept of ‘unrighteous sin’ is alien to Greco-Roman thought, another example how Christianity influenced the terminology and belief in the later Roman Empire.
- 72 Various scholars date its composition from the reign of Hadrian [Feuillâtre (1966), pp. 147–148] to as late as AD 350 [Bowersock (1994), pp. 149–160].
- 73 Heliodorus, *Aethiopica* 2.26–27, “Παραλείπω τὴν ἐν μέσῳ πλάνην ὃ νεανία, συντελεῖ γὰρ οὐδὲν εἰς τὴν παρὰ σοῦ ζήτησιν. Πυνθανόμενος δὲ εἶναι τινα Δελφοῦς Ἑλληνίδα πόλιν ἱερὰν μὲν Ἀπόλλωνος θεῶν δὲ τῶν ἄλλων τέμενος

- ἀνδρῶν τε σοφῶν ἐργαστήριον θορύβου τε δημώδους ἐκτὸς ἀνφικισμένην.” W.R. Paton trans.
- 74 Augustine *De civ. D.* 10.9, “*Nam et Porphyrius quandam quasi purgationem animae per theurgian, cunctanter tamen et pudibunda quodam modo disputatione promittit; reversionem vero ad Deum hanc artem praestare cuiquam nega; ut videas eum inter...sententiis alternantibus fluctuare.*” Porphyry fr. 289F3–4 in Smith and Wasserstein (1993).
- 75 Shaw (1985), p. 2; Smith (1997), p. 33 suggests that Porphyry did not mean to dismiss the practices as a hoax, but rather “to suggest that it did not live up to expectations.” See also Smith (1974), pp. 22–24.
- 76 Porph. *Epist. ad Aneb.* 14, “οἱ δ’ ὕδωρ πίνοντες, καθάπερ ὁ ἐν Κολοφῶνι ἱερεὺς τοῦ Κλαρίου, οἱ δὲ στομίους παρακαθήμενοι, ὡς αἱ ἐν Δελφοῖς θεσπίζουσαι, οἱ δ’ ἐξ ὑδάτων ἀτμιζόμενοι, καθάπερ αἱ ἐν Βραγχιδαῖς προφήτιδες.” You restrict the debate on oracles to these three, “not because there are only these...but because there are more celebrated than the rest,” (Τριῶν δὲ τουτωνὶ διωνύμων χρηστηρίων ἐμνημόνευσας, οὐχ ὅτι μόνα ἐνταῦθα, πολὺ γὰρ...ἀλλ’ ἐπεὶ προεῖχε τῶν ἄλλων ταῦτα), A. Wilder trans.
- 77 Iambl. *Myst.* 3.11 explains that “water possesses an oracular quality; but how this is so not every man, as the saying goes, may know. For it seems as through a mantic spirit extended through it, but this is not true. For the divine being does not go about among its participants, thus divided and apportioned, but, on the contrary, it shines upon the fountain as through giving of itself from without, and fills it with the mantic power from itself,” (Τὸ μὲν οὖν εἶναι μαντικὸν ἐκεῖνο τὸ ὕδωρ αὐτόθεν πρόδηλον· τὸ δὲ πῶς ἐστὶ τοιοῦτον, οὐκέτ’ ἂν, κατὰ τὴν παροιμίαν, πᾶς ἀνὴρ γνοίῃ· δοκεῖ μὲν γὰρ διήκειν τι δι’ αὐτοῦ πνεῦμα μαντικόν· οὐ μέντοι τό γε ἀληθὲς οὕτως ἔχει. Τὸ γὰρ θεῖον οὐ διαπεφοίτηκεν οὕτω διαστατῶς καὶ μεριστῶς ἐν τοῖς αὐτοῦ μετέχουσιν, ἀλλ’ ὡς παρέχον ἔξωθεν καὶ ἐπὶ λάμπον τὴν πηγὴν, πληροὶ δυνάμει αὐτὴν ἄφ’ ἑαυτοῦ μαντικῆς). This is a radical view, compared with traditional Greek and Roman thought, but it demonstrates how the perceptions of oracular institutions were changing.
- 78 Athanassiadi (1993a), p. 124. She suggests that Iamblichus is more akin to his Christian contemporaries in this regard.
- 79 Iambl. *Myst.* 3.12, “Εἰ δὴ ταῦτα ὀρθῶς εἰρήκαμεν, ὕπ’ οὐδενὸς οὔτε τόπου οὔτε μεριστοῦ σώματος ἀνθρωπίνου οὔτε ψυχῆς κατεχομένης ἐν ἐνὶ εἶδει μεριστῶν περιεῖληπται μεριστῶς ἢ μαντικῆ τῶν θεῶν δύναμις...”
- 80 Athanassiadi (1993a), p. 117.
- 81 Iambl. *Myst.* 3.11.123–128.
- 82 Iambl. *Myst.* 4.2.184, “in all theurgical operations the practitioner sustains a two-fold character; one, indeed, as man, and which preserves the order possessed by our nature in the universe; but the other, which is corroborated by divine signs, and through these is conjoined to more excellent natures, and is elevated to their order by an elegant harmony, this is deservedly capable of being surrounded with the external form of the Gods,” (Τῆς ὅλης θεωργίας διττόν ἐστι πρόσχημα, τὸ μὲν ὡς παρ’ ἀνθρώπων προσαγόμενον, ὅπερ δὴ τηρεῖ καὶ τὴν ἡμετέραν τάξιν ὡς ἔχει φύσεως ἐν τῷ παντί, τὸ δὲ κρατυνόμενον τοῖς θεοῖς συνθήμασι καὶ ἄνω μετέωρον δι’ αὐτῶν τοῖς κρείττοσι συναπτόμενον, περιαγόμενόν τε ἐμμελῶς ἐπὶ τὴν ἐκείνων διακόσμησιν, ὃ δὴ δύναται εἰκότως καὶ τὸ τῶν θεῶν σχῆμα περιτίθεσθαι.).
- 83 Shaw (1985), p. 11. See Iambl. *Myst.* 5.11–12 for animal sacrifice. His argument for the abandonment of the practice claims that since sacrifices are in themselves impure, it is not worthy of a gift to the gods and therefore unnecessary. For chanting, see Iambl. *Myst.* 7.3–4. He maintains that even if there are divine words unknown to us, they are still significant because they are known to the gods. Addey (2011) argues that *only* the theurgist would be privy to these “unknowable” words. This allowed them greater connection with the divine, as the

- practitioner was equipped with these secrets and could thus call on the gods by their secret name. And for the use of magical objects, see Iambli. *Myst.* 3.27. Iamblichus notes that the use of these magical stones, herbs, books, and birds demonstrates that divination and inspiration accedes externally, Iambli. *Myst.* 7.3–4. Iamblichus maintains that even if there are divine words unknown to us, they are still significant because they are known to the gods.
- 84 Plutarch (*De Is. et Os.* 378a–b), although a philosopher himself, explains the significance of adapting cult practices to the teachings of philosophy so that they do not become superstitious; he is particularly concerned with the cult of Isis and Osiris which had a large following throughout the Roman Empire.
- 85 Dillon (1996), p. 396.
- 86 See Dillon (1996), pp. 385–396. He devotes a section called “The spread of Platonic influence: the Platonic underworld,” to assess the extent to which Platonism was widely accepted and spread.
- 87 *Apocryphon of John* 3, F. Wisse trans.
- 88 Athanassiadi (1992), p. 60. See also Eunap. *VS* 10.8.1–2. Athanassiadi points out yet another instance of the universal recognition of theurgists and the practice; Maximus of Ephesus who was accused of interpreting an oracle concerning the death of Emperor Valens and was sentenced to death. However, no official present would carry out the punishment. Antioch Festus was called in to execute, since he had no moral scruples. Fate proved to support the theurgist, as Festus of Tridentum, the proconsul of Asia, died in an accident later, after having a dream in which Maximus dragged him to Hades.
- 89 Athanassiadi (1993b), pp. 11–12. The “socially exclusive” has more to deal with the categorization of a label, rather than applying to a particular stratum of society.
- 90 Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.18, 19–21; see also Chapter 5, (p. 126).
- 91 Majercik (1989), p. 63, fr. 37; Proclus, *In Parm.*, 800, 18–801, “Νοῦς πατὴρ ἐρροϊζήσε νοήσας ἀκμάδι βουλῇ παμμόρφους ιδέας, πηγῆς δὲ μιᾶς ἀπο πᾶσαι ἐξέθορον· πατρώθεν γὰρ ἦν βουλή τε τέλος τε. Ἀλλ’ ἐμερίσθησαν νοερῷ πυρὶ μοιρηθεῖσαι εἰς ἄλλας νοεράς· κόσμῳ γὰρ ἀναξ πολυμόρφῳ προὔθηκεν νοερὸν τύπον ἄφθιτον, οὗ κατ’ ἄκοσμον ἵχνος ἐπειγόμενος μορφῆς μετὰ κόσμος ἐφάνθη παντοίαις ιδέαις κεχαραγμένος· ὧν μία πηγὴ, ἐξ ἧς ροιζοῦνται μεμερισμέναι ἄλλαι ἅπλοτοι ῥηγνύμεναι κόσμου περὶ σώμασιν, αἱ περὶ κόλπους σμερδαλέους σμήνεσσιν εὐοικίαι φορέονται στράπτουσαι περὶ τ’ ἀμφὶ παρασχεδὸν ἄλλυδις ἄλλη, ἔννοιαι νοεραὶ πηγῆς πατρικῆς ἀπο, πούλῳ δρεπτόμεναι πυρὸς ἄνθος ἀκοιμήτου χρόνου ἀκμῆ. Ἀρχεγόνους ιδέας πρώτη πατὴρ ἐβλυσε τάσδε αὐτοτελῆς πηγῇ.”
- 92 Finamore and Johnston (2010), p. 162.
- 93 Majercik (1989), p. 6.
- 94 Sometimes the Highest god is referred to simply as “Father” (fr. 7, 14), “Source” (fr. 13, 30, 37), “One” (fr. 9), “Monad” (fr. 11, 26, 27), or “Paternal Intellect” (fr. 7, 39, 49, 108, 109). See Majercik (1989), p. 5. Furthermore, “fire” seems to be his “ultimate essence” according to Finamore and Johnston (2010), pp. 162–163. This notion goes all the way back to the Stoics and the Pre-Socratics.
- 95 The oracle regarding the soul of Plotinus, addressed in Chapter 4, is of spurious origin and so cannot be considered Delphic. See Chapter 4, (pp. 107–108) for details.
- 96 Finamore and Johnston (2010), p. 164. Citing fragments 8, 169, and 125. For commentary on fr.125, see Majercik (1989), p. 295.
- 97 Majercik (1989), p. 63; fr. 37.
- 98 Pl. *Tim.* 30b, “νοῦν δ’ αὖ χωρὶς ψυχῆς ἀδύνατον παραγενέσθαι τῷ. διὰ δὲ τὸν λογισμὸν τόνδε νοῦν μὲν ἐν ψυχῇ, ψυχὴν δ’ ἐν σώματι συνιστὰς τὸ πᾶν συνεκταίνετο, ὅπως ὅτι κάλλιστον εἶη κατὰ φύσιν ἄριστόν τε ἔργον ἀπειργασμένος. οὕτως οὖν δὴ κατὰ λόγον τὸν εἰκότα δεῖ λέγειν τόνδε τὸν κόσμον ζῶον ἔμψυχον ἔννοον τε τῇ ἀληθείᾳ διὰ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ.” W.R.M. Lamb trans.

- 99 The summits (ἀχρότητας) have been associated with the Iynges several fragments, which suggests a hierarchy. For example, “Likewise, the gods have taught us that there are numerous Iynges: ‘Many of these leap forth and stand upon shining worlds. Among these are three summits: that of fire, ether, and matter,’ (Ομοίως δὲ καὶ τὰς ἰγγας πολλὰς παραδιδόασιν οἱ θεοί· ‘πολλὰ μὲν δὴ αἶδε ἐπεμβαίνουσι φαείνοις κόσμοις ἐνθρώσκουσαι· ἐν αἷς ἀκρότητες ἔασιν τρεῖς. < πυρὴ γ’ ἡδ’ αἰθερίη καὶ ὑλώδης >), Majercik (1989), p. 79 fr. 76; Damascius, II, 88, 2–5.
- 100 Mead (1908), p. 10.
- 101 Psellus, 41, “αἱ ἰγγες νοοῦμεναι πατρόθεν νοέουσι καὶ αὐταί, βουλαῖς ἀφθέγκτοις κινούμεναι, ὥστε νοῆσα.” W.W. Westcott trans. See also Pletho, 31 and Westcott (1984), p. 31.
- 102 Majercik (1989), p. 81 fr. 82; Damascius II, 125, 19–23, “Μάλιστα δὲ συγκεκριλήρωται τοῖς συνοχεῦσιν, ἅτε περιειληφόσι πάντα ἐν ἑαυτοῖς καὶ συνέχουσιν· οὕτω δὲ καὶ οἱ θεοὶ λέγουσι· Φρουρεῖν αὐ πρηστήρησιν ἐοῖς ἀκρότητας ἔδωκεν, ἐγκεράσας ἀλκῆς ἴδιον μένος ἐν συνοχεῦσιν.”
- 103 Lewy (1978), pp. 417–418.
- 104 *Daemones* were also an integral aspect of Chaldean Oracles however, in contrast to Delphic *daemones* of Plutarch, the *daemones* of the Oracles were classified as evil demons, the presence of which was a popular idea at the time. “That (race of evil demons) draws down souls, (a race) which is also called ‘...bestial and shameless,’ since it is turned towards Nature,” (τὸ δὲ καθέλκει τὰς ψυχάς, ὃ καὶ ‘...θηροπόλον καὶ ἀναιδὲς’ καλεῖται, τὴν φύσιν ἐπιστρεφόμενον), Majercik (1989), p. 85 fr. 89; Psellus, *Hypotp.* 23.
- 105 Iamblichus does clarify that not everyone has the capacity for this possession, “only the more artless and young are suitable,” still these people can function as the “receptacle for a spirit that enters from without and holds the subject entranced,” (ἀλλὰ τοὺς ἀπλουστέρους καὶ νέους ἐπιτηδαιοτέρους... καταδοχὴν τῷ ἔξωθεν ἐπεισιόντι καὶ κατέχοντι πνεύματι), Iambl. *Myst.* 3.24.157.
- 106 For the cults of Cybele and Attis, see Gasparro (1985); for the Orphic movement, see Guthrie (1967).
- 107 Athanassiadi (1992), p. 56. Specifically, she argues that the solar theology, propagated by the oracles of Asia Minor, was made to prepare the public to accept the cults of *Sol Invictus Exsuperantissimus* as the official religion of the empire. This is perhaps supported by the link to the many other Divine Emperors. However, it seems like a grand scheme hiding behind the oracles, and does not account for all of the theological oracles addressed in Chapters 4 and 5.
- 108 Dodds (1963), p. 63. Although Proclus is late, his ideas can be thought of, perhaps, as the sum of his predecessors. Additionally, much of his work clearly summarizes Iamblichus who is often cryptic regarding many theurgic concepts.
- 109 Athanassiadi (1992), p. 62.

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Conclusion

The decline of Delphi is far more complicated than simply a cessation of oracular pronouncements. Rather, it is the state of Delphi in terms of operation, popularity, and flourishing ebbs and flows throughout the centuries. Although the oracle was finally closed after the edict of Theodosius in AD 391, there are no extant oracles which postdate AD 363. What happened in those centuries is still clouded from history, but it seems as though the oracle and the sanctuary itself witnessed different degrees and speeds of decline. The rise of Delphi can be attributed to several factors including geography, Greek identity, colonization, Panhellenism, and the simple desire of the Greeks to know the will of the gods. In the oracle's heyday, Apollo issued several oracles which were of significant political importance to a number of *poleis*. This furthered Delphi's reputation as an arbiter of all things Greek.

By the time of Plutarch's priesthood at Delphi, in the second century AD, the extant literary accounts seem to indicate a decadence of Delphi in terms of the quality, frequency, and significance of the responses. Plutarch's essays give a clear impression of oracular decline, but at the same time there are hints of a revival at Delphi. This book offered a solution to this apparent contradiction: the oracle may have been declining while the sanctuary itself still flourished in terms of visitors, dedications, and wealth. The supposed "revival" of the second century AD, proposed by modern scholars, was not necessarily oracular in nature. Instead, the revival is far more centered on renovation and rebuilding at the site of Delphi, rather than a sharp increase of oracular consultation. The extant oracular responses from Delphi continued to decline in number by the second and third centuries AD, while dedicatory edifices and material homage continued to be offered at the site. I have offered a new conceptualization of Delphi to grapple with the stages of its decline: a separation of the oracle (which offered oracular responses from Apollo on certain auspicious days) from the sanctuary (a multi-faceted religious institution with a variety of religious ceremonies and practices, including, for example, the Pythian Games). The sanctuary of Delphi, then, still maintained an historical and traditional significance, but as one of the ultimate avenues to divine revelation, Delphi had declined.

The nature of the sanctuary in the second and third centuries AD was explored through the various uses of sacred and profane space. The topography

of Delphi allowed for a clear separation of functions of the sanctuary, which helped facilitate the separation between the oracle and the day-to-day operations. Because Apollo's sanctuary is situated on the steep cliffs of Parnassus, the use of space varied and the oracle was not always the focus of visitor's attention or homage. The Pythian Games and other festivals, as well as the worship of several different gods at Delphi, allowed the sanctuary to continue despite a decline in oracular consultation.

Furthermore, the exploration of the state of other oracular centers during Delphi's decline provided context with which to view this state of affairs. A particular focus has been placed on the oracles of Asia Minor, as they *were* experiencing an oracular revival in the second and third centuries AD. A brief outline of the history of these oracles has shown that they were relatively successful, in terms of the number of consultants and the significance of the consultations, compared to Delphi by the second and third centuries AD. The nature of this revival was largely shown by the emphasis on theological questions presented to Apollo, as well as issues of a communal nature (as opposed to personal questions which characterized Delphi's oracular administration during this time). Although several political, economic, and geographic issues had an impact upon the success of these oracles, I have focused on the religious implications of their oracular accomplishment, as compared to Delphi. The interest seen in Asia Minor concerned issues which were not previously considered oracular territory, for example, those concerning religious sentiments which fall outside of the traditional Greco-Roman religion such as Judaism, Christianity, and the transmigration of the soul. As Delphi did not demonstrate expertise in these matters, and declined while Asia Minor incorporated these issues and thrived, I have suggested a correlation – Delphi did not adapt to the new religious concerns of the time and this contributed to its decline.

Indeed, the rise of new forms of access to the divine offered competition to Delphi. Although correlation does not imply causation, a connection between the rise of new esoteric practices and written revelation certainly influenced the practice of oracular consultation at Delphi. The spread of astrology and theurgy, along with their similar function of connecting humanity with divine knowledge, allowed these occult practices to be sought in lieu of oracular divination. Astrology has been shown to offer a similar set of divinatory knowledge as Delphi did, but offered the additional authority of a developing science. This has been shown by the various types of astrology and its comparison with particular questions Delphi helped to answer. The elements of observation, prediction, and replication served to strengthen astrology's authority, while at the same time utilizing familiar concepts of deified planets which influenced humanity just as the moon influenced the tides. Astrology, by the second century AD, was considerably popular throughout the Mediterranean just as Delphi was losing clients.

Likewise, theurgy offered connection to the divine. Significantly, however, theurgic and Neoplatonic beliefs offered a *personal* connection to the gods. A trained theurgist could gain divine knowledge and even become part of the

divine. Through the use of philosophical contemplation, along with the use of particular sacred objects, a theurgist could gain salvation of the soul: the eternal aspect of one's being reunites with the ultimate divinity. In addition to the personal contact and the salvation which theurgy offered – an increasing concern to people in the second and third centuries AD – theurgy was connected to a set of written revelation called the Chaldean Oracles. These became a sort of “holy book” and this codification allowed for their spread and incorporation by a wider level of adherents. Issues found in the Oracles are also seen within a cultic context at the Asia Minor oracles, and thus demonstrated their infiltration into society at a broader level than the intellectual elite. The ideas found within the Oracles, and the teachings of the Neoplatonists, demonstrate a new dimension of divinatory practices which was gaining popularity and authority as Delphi was in decline. In this way, these occult practices offered competition to Delphi. Although they were not the sole contributor to the decline of oracular consultation, they certainly assisted in society's changing perception of Delphi, divination, and the divine. These trends continued because they offered explanations and control, two commodities that were not inherently Delphic.

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